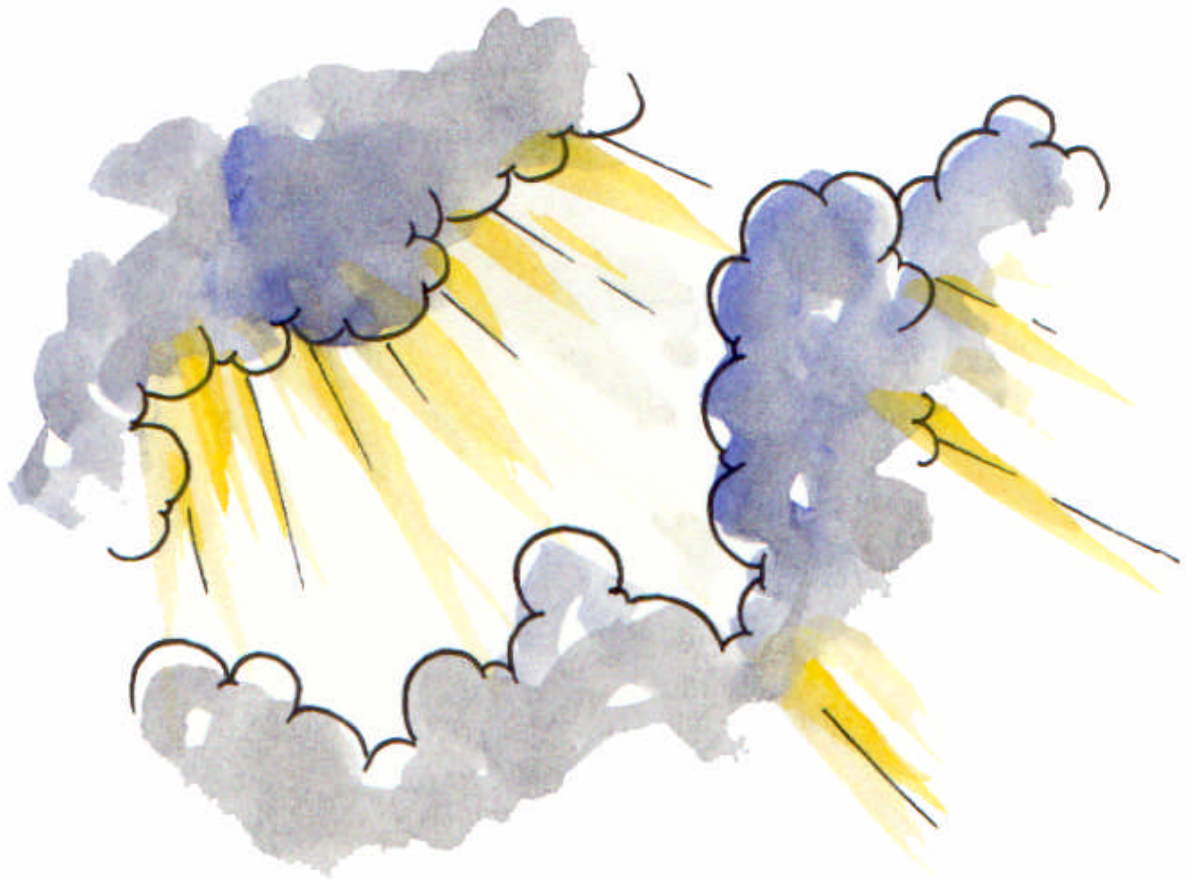


THE SAINT'S EVERLASTING REST

"There remains therefore a rest to the people of God"
- Hebrews 4:9



An abridgement of the original work
by Richard Baxter

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The Nature of the Saints' Rest

From heaven's height the soul surveys the Promised Land. Looking back on earth, the soul views the dreary wilderness through which it passed. To stand on Mount Memory, comparing heaven with earth, fills the soul with unimaginable gratitude, and makes it exclaim:

"Is this the inheritance that cost so much as the blood of Christ? No wonder! O blessed price! Is this the result of believing? Have the gales of grace blown me into such a harbor? Is this where Christ was so eager to bring me? O praise the Lord! Is this the glory of which the Scriptures spoke, and of which ministers preached so much? I see the Gospel is indeed good news!

"Are all my troubles, Satan's temptations, the world's scorns and jeers, come to this? O vile nature, that resisted so much, and so long, such a blessing! Unworthy soul, is this the place you came to so unwillingly? Was duty tiresome? Was the world too good to lose? Could you not leave all, deny all, and suffer anything for *this*? Were you loathe to die to come to this? O false heart, you had almost betrayed me to eternal flames and lost me this glory! Are you not ashamed now, my soul, that you ever questioned that Love which brought you here? Are you not sorry that you ever quenched His Spirit's prompting or misinterpreted His providence, or complained about the narrow road that brought you to such a destination?

"Now you are sufficiently convinced that your blessed Redeemer was saving you, as well when he crossed your desires, as when he granted them; when he broke your heart, as when he bound it up. No thanks to you, unworthy self, for this crown; but to God be the glory forever!"

Here on earth our condition is quite different. We have lost interest in God. We have lost all true knowledge of Him. When the Son of God comes to rescue us and bring us back to God, He does not find in us the ability to believe. He offers us eternal happiness, but we blink blindly and stare at Him with disbelief. As the poor man who refused to believe that anyone could have a million dollars because that was so far above what he himself possessed, so when Christ comes offering us heavenly treasures, it seems beyond belief.

When God wanted to give the Israelites their rest in the Promised Land, it was harder to make them believe it than to overcome their enemies and give it to them. When, at last, the Israelites possessed the land, they had only a "cash

advance" on a much greater inheritance to come. Yet they could not believe God for more than they already possessed. If they expected more from the Messiah at some future time, they envisioned only an increase of their earthly prosperity. The writer of the book of Hebrews aims most of his letter against such unbelief. The rest provided in the Promised Land of Canaan and in the sacred Sabbaths was intended to teach God's people to look for a *further rest* in Christ.

"There remains therefore a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). This text is the writer's conclusion after various arguments. This conclusion contains the basis of all

the believer's comfort, the purpose of all his service and suffering, the sum of all the Gospel promises.

And now, dear reader, whoever you are, young or old, rich or poor, I appeal to you in the name of your Lord, who will soon call you to a reckoning and judge you to your everlasting, unchangeable state. I charge you to do more than merely *read* these words. Do more than read and dismiss these things with a nodding of approval; but enthusiastically *commit* yourself to this work. Fix your heart upon God in Christ. Find in Him your only rest.

May the living God, who is the goal and rest of all His saints, make our carnal minds so spiritual, and our earthly hearts so heavenly, that loving Him, and delighting in Him, may be the main activity of our lives. God grant that neither I that write, nor you that read this book, may ever be turned from this path of life; "lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest," we should "come short of it," (Heb. 4:1) through our own unbelief or negligence.

What is the saints' everlasting rest? It is the perfect, endless enjoyment of God by the perfected believers, to which their souls arrive at death. Further, it is that eternal enjoyment of God to which both soul and body arrive most fully after the resurrection and final judgment.

Though angels and risen spirits enjoy this rest already, mortals are far away from it, and by nature, are going in the opposite direction. All are making haste towards hell, until by *conviction*, Christ brings them to a halt, and then, by *conversion*, turns their hearts and lives sincerely to himself. Those who never knew they were without God and on the way to hell, never knew the way to heaven. Whoever sought for what he didn't know he had lost? "Those who are healthy need not a physician, but those who are sick" (Matt. 9:12).

There are **Five Conditions** represented in the heavenly rest.

1. Ceasing From the Means of Grace

When we have reached the port, we have finished sailing. When the workman receives his wages, it is implied he has done his work. There shall be no more prayer, because no more necessity, but the full enjoyment of what we prayed for. Neither shall we need to fast, and weep, and watch any more, being out of the reach of sin and temptations. Preaching is finished. The laborers are called in, because the harvest is gathered, the weeds burned, and the work completed. The unregenerate are past hope, and the saints are past fear forever.

2. Perfect Freedom From All Evils

In heaven there is nothing that spoils. All *that* remains outside. There is not such a thing as grief or regret. No sorrow or sickness, no weak body, aching joints, helpless infancy, decrepit age, bad temperament, tormenting fears, alarming anxieties, stabbing pain, nor anything that deserves the name of evil. We wept when the world rejoiced, but our sorrow is turned to joy, and no one can ever take that joy away.

3. Personal Perfection Both of Body and Soul

If God did not perfect us to make us capable of appreciating heaven, it would little matter to us how wonderful heaven might be. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). The physical eye is not capable of seeing them, nor this ear of hearing them, nor this heart of understanding them. In heaven the eye, ear, and heart are made capable. The more perfect the sight is, the more delightful the beautiful object. The more perfect the appetite, the sweeter the food. The more musical the ear, the more pleasant the melody. The more perfect the soul, the more glorious to us is God's glory.

4. Nearness to God

Here, reader, do not be surprised if I be at a loss to explain. If it did not appear to the beloved disciple what we shall be, but only in general that when Christ "shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2), no wonder if I know little. When I know so little of God, I cannot very well know what it is to enjoy Him.

I stand and look upon a hill of ants. They don't know me, my nature, or my thoughts, though I am their fellow *creature*. How little, then, must we know of the great *Creator*, though He, with one view, clearly beholds us all.

If I should tell a worldling what the holiness and spiritual joys of the saints on earth are, he cannot understand; for grace cannot be clearly known without grace. How much less could he conceive it, should I tell him of the heavenly glory. But to the saints I may be somewhat more encouraged to speak, for grace gives them a slight foretaste of glory.

If men and angels should try to express the blessedness of that state, what could they say beyond this, that it is the nearest enjoyment of God? O the full joys offered to a believer in that one sentence of Christ, "Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be WITH ME where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me" (John 17:24).

5. New Powers of Body and Soul In the Enjoyment of God

This eternal rest is not the rest of a stone which ceases from all motion. O Christian, this is a rest, as it were, without rest; for "they rest not day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8). This BODY shall be so changed, that it shall no more be flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God; but a spiritual body. If grace makes a Christian differ so much from what he was, as to say, "I am not the man I was," how much more will the resurrection make us different. Our senses shall exceed what we now experience. God will fill up, with Himself, the expanded capacity of our glorified senses. Certainly the body would not be raised up and continued if it were not to share in the glory.

How wonderful is the MIND also. It can measure the sun, moon, stars, and predict each eclipse to the minute, many years in advance. But the peak of its accomplishments is that it can know God, who made all these. Christian, when, after long gazing heavenward, you have caught a glimpse of Christ, are you not ready to

say, with Peter, "Master, it is good for us to be here"? (Mark 9:5). "O that I might dwell on this mountain top! O that I might always see what I now see!"

Consider the enjoyment of God's *LOVE*. Did He love you, an enemy—a sinner? Will He not now immeasurably love you, a son—a perfect saint? He that in love wept over the old Jerusalem when near its ruin (Matt. 23:37), with what love will He rejoice over the New Jerusalem in her glory! (Rev. 21:2).

Christian, believe this, and think on it—you shall be embraced in the arms of that love which brought the Son of God from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory. Know this, believer, to your everlasting comfort; if those arms have once embraced you, neither sin, nor hell can get you again forever. The saints' everlasting rest consists in the enjoyment of God by love.

Consider also the part of *JOY*. You, poor soul, who may now pray for joy and wait for joy, and complain for lack of joy. It may be God keeps your joy until you have more need. Better that you lose your comfort than your safety. If you should die full of fear and sorrow, it would be but a moment and they would all be gone and replaced with joy unimaginable. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). O blessed morning! Poor, humble, drooping soul, how would it fill you with joy *now*, if a voice from heaven should tell you of the love of God, the pardon of your sins, and assure you of your part in these joys! Think what your joy will be, when your actual possession of it all shall convince you of its truth!

It will be not only *your* joy, but a *mutual* joy. Is there joy in heaven at your conversion? (Luke 15:7). Will there be none at your glorification? Will not the angels welcome you there and congratulate your safe arrival?

But wait! Dare we proceed further into these marvelous mysteries of God? I think I hear the Almighty's voice saying to me, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2). O forgive your servant, Lord. I have not pried into unrevealed things. I regret that my understanding is so dull, and my expression so inadequate for such a glory. I have only *heard* of these wonders. O let your servant see you and possess these joys, and then I shall give more accurate descriptions and give you fuller glory. Then would I confess, "I have uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not" (Job 42:3). Yet "I believed, therefore have I spoken" (Ps. 116:10). Though the weakness be the result of my own dullness, yet the fire is from your altar. Forgive the sins that stain this effort. Wash them away in the blood of the Lamb. Imperfect, or none, must be your service here. O take your Son's excuse for His disciples, which excuse we also plead, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41).

The Hallway to the Saints' Rest

The hallway to heaven is not barricaded anymore. The flaming sword no longer bars the passage to Paradise, for Christ has provided the way in. The porch of this temple is magnificent, and the gate of it is called "Beautiful." Here are the four corners of this porch of Paradise.

1. The Second Coming of Christ

For our sake Christ came into the world, suffered, died, rose, ascended; and for our sake He will return. He will come again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. We have His word, His many promises, His ordinances, which show forth His death until He come. We have His Spirit, to direct, sanctify, and comfort until He returns. He that would come to suffer, will surely come to triumph. He that would come to purchase, will surely come to possess.

O fellow-Christians, what a day that will be, when we, who have been kept prisoners by sin, shall be brought out by the Lord himself! He will not come, O careless world, to be slighted and neglected by you any more. Yet even His first coming, had its magnificence. If, when He was in the form of a servant, they cried out, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matt. 8:27), what will they say when they shall see Him coming in His glory, and the heavens and the earth obey Him?

The Resurrection of the Body

The second event that leads to Paradise is Christ's great work of raising the body from the dust and uniting it again with the soul. Unbelief may ask, "Shall all these scattered bones and dust become a man?" Let me with reverence answer for God. Is it not as easy to raise the dead as to make heaven and earth out of nothing? Look not on the dead bones and dust and difficulty, but at the promise. Contentedly commit these bodies to a prison that shall not long contain them. Let us lie down in peace and take our rest; it will not be an everlasting night, nor endless sleep. Lay down cheerfully this clod of mortality; you shall undoubtedly receive it again as immortal. Lay down freely this earthly body; you shall receive it again, a heavenly body. Though you be separated from it in weakness, it shall be raised again in mighty power; "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet—for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52). "The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Triumph now, O Christian, in these *promises*; you shall surely triumph in their *performance*. The grave that could not keep our Lord, cannot keep us. He arose for us, and by the same power will cause us to arise.

The Judgment

The third corner of this porch at the entrance to Paradise is the judgment, where the saints shall first be acquitted, and then with Christ judge the world. Then shall the

world behold the goodness and severity of God—on those who perish, severity; but to His chosen ones, goodness.

The sinners shall see the Lord Jesus, whom they neglected, whose Word they disobeyed, whose ministers they abused, whose servants they hated, now sitting to judge them. Their own consciences shall cry out against them, and call to their remembrance all their misdoings. Which way will the wretched sinner look? Who can imagine the terrible thoughts of his heart? Now the world cannot help him; his old companions cannot; the saints neither can nor will. Only the Lord Jesus can; but there is the misery—He will not.

Time was, sinner, when Christ would have saved you, and you would not have Him; now you want Christ's help when it is too late. It is useless to cry "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne" (Rev. 6:16); for you have the 'Lord of the mountains and rocks' for your enemy, and the mountains and rocks obey *His* voice, not yours. I charge you, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the living and the dead at His appearing, that you seriously ponder these things now.

But why are *you* trembling, O humble recipient of grace? He that would not lose one Noah in the flood, nor overlook one Lot in Sodom; will He forget you at that day? "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet. 2:9). He knows how to make the same day to be the greatest terror to His enemies—and yet the greatest joy to His friends. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1).

What wonderful joy, that our dear Lord, who loves us, and whom we love, shall be our Judge! Will a man fear to be judged by his dearest friend, or a wife by her own husband? Christian, did Christ come down and suffer, and weep, and bleed, and die for you, and will He now condemn you? Was He judged, condemned, and executed in your place, and now will He himself condemn you? Well, then, let the terror of Judgment Day be ever so great, surely our Lord can mean no harm to us at all. Let it make the devil and the wicked tremble—but it shall make us leap for joy.

Christ will take His people into commission with himself, and they shall sit and approve His righteous judgment. "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know you not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:2, 3). Were it not for the Word of Christ that speaks it, this announcement would seem unbelievable. But thus shall the saints be honored according to Scripture.

The Coronation

The last preparation for the saints' everlasting rest is their royal coronation and receiving of the kingdom. Our Lord's own proper title is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). Our position is to be kings and to reign with Him (Rev. 1:6). We will not be flattered with empty titles, but dignified with real authority. The Lord himself will give us possession with this word of congratulation—"Well done, good and faithful servant—you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things—enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matt. 25:23). With this solemn and

blessed proclamation our King of Kings shall enthrone us—"Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Thus we have seen the Christian safely entered into Paradise and received to his rest.

The Splendor of the Saints' Rest

Let us draw a little nearer and see the splendor of this heavenly rest. The Lord cover us with His gentle grace while we approach to take this view.

What an honor is this rest. It is called the purchased possession because Christ bought it for us with His sacrifice. As we write down the price our purchases cost us, so let us write down the price of heaven as—THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST.

It was costly for Christ, but FREE for us. If both the Father and the Son freely offer us the purchased life on our willing acceptance; and if they freely send the Holy Spirit to enable us to accept; what do we have in heaven that is not free? O the everlasting admiration that must surprise the saints to think of this freeness! What an astonishing thought it will be, to think of the immeasurable difference between our deservings and receivings—between the state we *should* have been in, and the state we *are* in. What depths of gratitude will we feel to look down upon hell and think, "Yonder is the place that *sin* would have brought me; but this is where *Christ* has brought me! Yonder lies the wages of my sin, but this eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Who made the difference? Would I not now have been in hell if I had had my own way, and been allowed my own will? Would I not have lingered in Sodom until the flames had ignited me, if God had not in mercy brought me out?" We know to whom the praise is due and shall be given forever.

Let "DESERVED" be written on the door of hell; but on the door of heaven, "THE FREE GIFT."

Special mercy arouses more gratitude than universal mercy. If Pharaoh had passed as safely as Israel through the Red Sea, the miracle would have been less memorable. If the rest of the world had not been drowned, the saving of Noah had not been so noteworthy. If Sodom and Gomorrah had not burned, the deliverance of Lot would not have been talked of so much. That will surely be a day to remember, when there shall be two in one bed, and two in the field, the one taken and the other left (Luke 17:34, 36).

We will enjoy the *communion of saints*. As we have been together in duty, danger, and distress, so shall we be together in the great deliverance. If the forethought of sitting down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven may be our proper joy, how much more the real sight and actual experience? It is surely comforting to think of that day when we shall join with Moses in his song, with David in his psalms of praise, and with all the redeemed in the song of the Lamb forever.

Not only our old acquaintances, but all the saints of all ages, whose faces in the flesh we never saw, we shall there both know and enjoy. Yes, even angels, as well as saints, will be our acquaintances. Those angels who now are willingly helping us, as God's invisible agents, will then be our companions in joy. It is a beautiful characteristic of the heavenly rest, that we are "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

On earth we receive God's blessings through secondary causes. They come second hand, or even third hand, or who knows how indirectly? To have needs but no satisfaction of them, is the condition of hell. To have needs met by other creatures, is our condition on earth. To have *needs met immediately and directly by God*, is the condition of the saints in heaven. To have no needs at all, is the condition of God alone.

He who makes His people "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, who brings forth his fruit in his season" (Ps. 1:3), will also give them the reward in His season. Do we complain because we do not find a Canaan in the wilderness? Do we lament because we cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land? (Ps. 137:4). Do we groan because we find no harbor in the middle of the ocean? Do we object because we cannot sleep during working-hours? Wouldn't all of these things be very unseasonable? Shall we then wonder why we cannot have heaven on earth? Wouldn't that be just as unseasonable?

The new nature which God gives the redeemed, matches the reward that awaits them. Indeed, their holiness is provided by the Spirit of Christ, to fit them for heaven. God provides a spiritual rest suitable to their spiritual nature.

We are now as the fish in an aquarium. There is enough water in the aquarium to keep the fish alive, but what is that compared with the ocean? In heaven we shall live in a compatible environment. Christian, this is a rest after your own heart; it contains all that your heart could desire. That which you long for, pray for, work for; there you shall find it all.

Heaven excludes sin. What was the use of Christ's dying on the Cross, if heaven could have contained imperfect souls? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Christian, if you once reach heaven, you shall sin no more. Isn't this good news? That hard heart, those evil thoughts, which tagged along, nagging you, shall be left behind forever. All baffling Scriptures shall be made plain; all seeming contradictions shall be reconciled.

We shall rest from the temptations of Satan. What a grief it is to a Christian, though he resist the temptation, yet to be solicited to deny his Lord. What a torment to have such obscene suggestions made to his soul, such horrible ideas presented to his imagination, rebellious thoughts of God, unbelieving thoughts of Scripture. Especially when we know the treachery of our own hearts, ready as fuel to ignite the instant one of those sparks should fall upon them. Satan has power here on earth to tempt us, but he cannot enter there.

All our temptations from the world and the flesh shall also cease. Here we are in continual danger. We can hardly open our eyes without danger of envying people above us, or despising those below us. If we see beauty, it is a bait to lust. If we see deformity, we are liable to feel repulsion. If we are beautiful, it is fuel for pride. If we are ugly, we are likely to complain. If we have a high intelligence and gifts of learning, how prone we are to be puffed up, to seek applause, and to look down on ordinary folks. On the other hand, if we are not well educated, how easy it is to ridicule what we don't have and despise the scholarly. Are we in a position of power? How strong is the temptation to abuse our authority and mold others to our benefit. Are we subordinates? Then we are prone to envy others, to be critical and rebellious.

It is our own corruption that thus traps us. We are our own worst enemies. But our heavenly rest will free us from all this. As Satan has no entrance there, so he has nothing to aid his subversion; but all things there shall help us praise our great Deliverer.

We shall also rest there from our divisions and unchristian quarrels with each other. How lovingly do thousands live together in heaven, who lived in discord upon earth. There is no conflict there, because there is none of this pride, ignorance, or sin.

Is it not enough that all the world is against us, but we must also be against one another? O happy days of persecution, which drove us together in love. O happy day of the saints' rest in glory, when we shall have perfect unity. Now, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12); then, those who suffered with Him, shall be glorified with Him, and be at peace together.

Best of all, it will be an **everlasting** rest. The very thought of leaving it would embitter all our joys. It would be a hell in heaven, to think of once losing heaven. Study frequently, study thoroughly this one word—eternity. O that the sinner would study this word. I think it would startle him out of his dead sleep. O that the saved soul would study it. I think it would revive him in his devotion. "Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever" (1 Tim. 1:17).

Reader, if you are a humble, sincere believer, and are waiting and longing for this rest, you will soon see and experience the truth of all this. You will then have such an understanding of this blessed state as to know that all I have written falls short of the whole truth a thousand-fold. In the meantime, let this much kindle your desires and revive your service.

What difference would it make in our daily lives, do you think, if we would keep this glory fresh in our thoughts? Would we be so inclined toward depression and discouragement? Would we be so unwilling to suffer or so afraid to die? May the Lord heal our carnal hearts, lest we enter not into this rest because of unbelief (Heb. 4:6).

The People Who Receive the Saints' Rest

The heavenly rest is designed for "the people of God," as the text identifies them (Heb. 4:9). They are chosen by God "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). They are but a part of humanity. They are fewer than the world imagines, yet not as few as some narrow-minded people think.

*These people are **born again**.* It is as impossible to be the people of God without being "born again" spiritually, as it is to be children of humans without first being born. The greatest reformation of life that can be attained without this new life from God may provide us with further *delusion*, but it will never gain us *salvation*.

*The people of God **experience conviction**.* They are convinced of the evil of SIN. The sinner comes to realize that the sin which was formerly his delight, is loathsome to him and God. Before he saw nothing so bad about sin that Christ should have to die for it. Now when God opens his eyes, he sees the inexpressible vileness of sin, and he becomes willing to admit the worst about himself.

Before they read the threats of God's law as men read about foreign wars. Now they realize it is their own story. They suddenly see they are reading about their own doom! As the prophet Nathan accused King David with the words, "You are the man" (2 Sam. 12:7), so the sinner finds his own name written in the curse of the law. Before the wrath of God seemed to him to be like a storm outside his own warm home, or like the pain of a sick person to the one who is only visiting him. Now, however, he finds the disease is his own, and discovers he is himself a condemned man. This conviction is the work of the Spirit. Why would a person come to Christ for pardon if he did not first find himself guilty? "Those who are whole have no need of the physician, but those who are sick" (Mark 2:17).

The people of God are convinced of THEIR OWN INSUFFICIENCY. Our natural inclination is to be our own god. When God should guide us, we guide ourselves. When God should be our King, we rule ourselves. We find fault with the laws God gives. If we had made them, we would have made them differently. When we should depend upon God, we prefer to have our own security without having to depend on Him. When we should submit to His providence, we usually quarrel with it and think we could devise a better plan for our lives. We want popularity with other people more than we desire to please God. We want human appreciation and admiration. Thus we are by nature our own idols. But once God renews the soul, this idol falls down like the old Philistine idol Dagon which fell down broken before the Ark of God (1 Sam. 5:3).

Sometimes trouble helps a person turn to God. Sickness says, "See if your wealth or pleasures can help you! Can they keep your departing soul in your body? Cry aloud to them, and see if they can substitute for God!" O how this gets through to the sinner. Common sense admits the truth, and even the flesh is convinced of its own insufficiency.

On the other hand, the people of God are convinced of the full SUFFICIENCY OF JESUS CHRIST. As a hungry man is convinced of the necessity of food, so the sinner sees that none but Christ can satisfy him. Not gold, but food, will satisfy the starving

person; and only pardon can comfort the condemned. As the sinner sees his misery, and the inability of himself or others to relieve him; he turns to the only One who can help him—the Lord Jesus Christ.

The WILL is also changed by the Christian's conviction. While sin may still appeal to the flesh, the will hates it. God causes this to happen. Convinced that Christ alone is able and willing to save him and that nothing else can be his happiness, the sinner affectionately accepts Christ as his Savior and Lord. To accept Christ without love, is not justifying faith; for faith is the receiving of Christ with the whole soul. Faith either accepts Christ as Savior *and* Lord, or not at all. Faith not only acknowledges Christ's *sufferings*, and accepts His salvation; but it acknowledges His *sovereignty*, and submits to His rule.

I urge you, reader, to consider whether you have these characteristics of God's people. I am not asking whether you remember the time when you became a Christian. It is not so important to know when or how you came to have these characteristics, but carefully examine yourself and see if you have been thoroughly convinced of how vile sin is and of the wickedness that saturated your life. Do you consent to the law of God, that it is true and righteous, and that you are justly condemned to death by it? Have you renounced all your own righteousness? Have you cast the idols out of your heart? Does Christ now have the highest room in your life and love, so that, though you cannot love Him as much as you wish, yet nothing else is loved as much? Have you made a sincere covenant with Him, and committed yourself to Him? Is it your endeavor to be found faithful to this covenant and to belong entirely to the Lord? If this is truly your condition, then you are one of "the people of God" in the text (Heb. 4:9); and as sure as the promise of God is true, this blessed rest remains for you! Just be certain that you "abide in Christ" (John 15:4), and "endure to the end" (Matt. 10:22).

The Scripture promises this rest to God's people. The sacred pages are bespangled with these divine promises, as the sky is with stars. Christ says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Therefore the saints in heaven sing a new song unto him who has redeemed them "to God by his blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

Scripture assures us that the people of God have the beginnings, foretastes, guarantees, and seals of this promised rest now in this life—1 Peter 2:3; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30. "The kingdom of God is within" them (Luke 17:21). They "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2). The Scripture also mentions, by name, those who have entered into this rest; for instance, Enoch, Abraham, Lazarus, and the thief who was crucified with Christ.

Scripture not only proves that this rest is for the people of God, but also that it is for none but them; so that the remainder of the world shall have no part in it. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Ps. 9:17). "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven...in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

In hell, sinners shall forever lay all the blame on their own wills. Hell is a rational torment by conscience. If sinners could then say, "It was God's fault, and not ours," that would quiet their consciences and ease their torments. But to remember their stubbornness will feed the fire, and cause the worm of conscience "never to die" (Mark 9:44). God offered the ungodly the gift of life, but they would not accept it. The pleasures of sin seemed more desirable to them than the glory of the saints. Satan offered them the one, and God offered them the other; and they had freedom to choose which they wanted; but they chose "the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25), instead of the everlasting rest with Christ.

It is the will of God that this rest should remain for His people, and not be possessed until they come to heaven. All things must come to their perfection by degrees. The strongest man must first be a child. The greatest scholar must first begin with the alphabet. The tallest oak was once an acorn. This life is our infancy; do we want to be born 'full grown'? If our rest were here, most of God's providences would be useless. Should God lose the glory of His church's miraculous deliverances so that men might have their happiness here? If we were all happy, innocent, and perfect, what use would there be for sanctification, justification, and future glorification? If we lacked nothing, we would not depend on God so much, nor call upon Him as earnestly. How little would He hear from us, if we had whatever we wanted!

God would never have had such songs of praise from Moses at the Red Sea, nor from David after deliverance from enemies, nor from Hezekiah after healing from sickness, if they had been the choosers of their own condition. Reader, haven't your own highest praises to God been the result of your dangers and troubles? The greatest glory and praise God receives is for salvation through Christ, and was not man's misery the occasion of that? And where God loses the opportunity of exercising His mercies, man must lose the happiness of enjoying them. O the sweet comforts the saints have had in return for their prayers. We would never have felt Christ's compassion, if we had not felt ourselves "weary and heavy laden," hungry and thirsty, poor and repentant. It is a delight for a soldier to look back on his escapes when they are over; and for a saint in heaven to look back on his sins and sorrows upon earth; his fears and tears, his enemies and dangers, his needs and tragedies, must make his joy more joyful. Therefore the blessed, in praising the Lamb of God in heaven, mention His having redeemed them out of every nation and kindred and tongue, and so out of their misery and need and sin, and having made them "kings and priests" to God (Rev. 5:9-10). But if they had experienced nothing but contentment and rest on earth, what place would there have been for these rejoicings hereafter?

Besides, we are not capable of rest upon this earth. Can a soul that is so weak in grace, so prone to sin, have full contentment and rest in such a condition? What is soul rest but our freedom from sin and imperfections and enemies? He that observes the works of the Lord, may easily see that the purpose of these things is to break down our idols, to make us weary of the world so that we will seek our rest in Him. God will not change the course of justice, to give you rest before you have worked, nor the crown of glory until you have overcome. There is reason enough why our rest should remain until the life to come. Take heed, then, Christian reader, how you dare to desire a rest on earth, or to murmur at God for your troubles and toil in the flesh.

Do the wrongs of the wicked weary you? Do the evils of the times provoke you? It must be so while you are absent from your rest. Do your own sins and bad tempered emotions weary you? May this make you more willing to go to God for your rest. And if not, then may you become even more weary until God's rest seems more desirable.

I have just one more thing to add before I close this chapter—that the souls of believers in heaven do enjoy unimaginable blessedness and glory, even while they remain separated from their bodies until the resurrection. What can be more plain than these words of Paul—"I am in a straight between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better—nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:23-24). If Paul had not expected to enjoy Christ until the resurrection, why should he desire to depart? Faithful souls will no sooner leave their prisons of flesh than angels shall be their convoy. Heaven will be their residence, and God their happiness. When such die, they may boldly and believingly say, as Stephen did, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59), and commend it, as Christ did, into the Father's hands (Luke 23:46).

The Misery of Those Who Lose the Saints' Rest

If you, reader, are a stranger to Christ and to the holy nature and life of His people, and if you live and die in this condition, let me tell you that you will never partake of the joys of heaven or have the least taste of the saints' everlasting rest.

I must repeat the sinister words of Judges 8:20, "I have a message to you from God." Do you recall the spine-tingling episode, how the left-handed Ehud brought a present to the enemy king Eglon? Ehud hid a double-edged dagger under his coat. It was not on the usual thigh because Ehud was left-handed. Consequently it was not detected by the guards. The king was sitting in splendor in his summer parlor. "And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto you. And he arose out of his seat. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly" (Judg. 3:20-21). Like Ehud to Eglon, I must say to you, "I have a message to you from God."

As the Scriptures describe the Word of God as a double-edged sword, so I must draw that sword on you, and say that, as the Word of God is true, you will never see the face of God in peace. You will see Him as judge but not as justifier. This sentence I am commanded to pass upon you; take it as you will, and escape it if you can! I know that your humble and sincere acceptance of Christ would provide your escape. He would then acknowledge you to be one of His people and give you a part of the inheritance. If this could be the happy success of my message, I would bless the day that God made me so privileged a messenger. But if you end your days in your unsaved state, as sure as the heavens are over your head and the earth beneath your feet, you shall be shut out of the heavenly rest.

You may object, and say, "When did God show you the book of life, or tell you who shall be saved, and who shut out?" I answer, I do not name you, nor any other. I only conclude that this is the case of the unsaved in general, and of you, if you are one. I do not attempt to predict who will repent or who will not. I would rather persuade you to listen in time, BEFORE the door is shut against you, than to tell you there is no hope of your repenting. But, if the description of the people of God in the previous chapter does not agree with the condition of your soul, isn't it a real question as to whether you will ever be saved? Do I need to ascend up into heaven to know that without "holiness, no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14); or that only "the pure in heart, shall see God" (Matt. 5:8); or that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"? (John 3:3). Do I need to go up to heaven to ask Christ what He came down to earth to tell us, and sent His Spirit to tell us through His apostles? How can you escape if you neglect Christ and salvation? (Heb. 2:3).

The bodies of the wicked will be raised more spiritual than they were upon earth. That will make them capable of greater suffering. They would be glad if every member were a dead member, that it might not feel the punishment inflicted on it. What is worse, they lack that moral perfection which the blessed enjoy—that cheerful readiness to do the will of God. Instead of this, they have a perverseness of will, a hatred of good. They have the same love of evil and violent emotions that they had on earth. They have the same dispositions and would commit the same sins if they could, but they lack the opportunity.

They will have no communion with God. "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28), but said to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of your ways" (Job 21:14), so God will refuse to keep them in His household. Worldlings can now say, "God is our Father as well as yours." But when Christ separates His followers from His foes, what will become of their presumptuous claims? They will find that God is not their Father, because they would not be His people. As they would not consent that God, by His Spirit, should dwell in them, so they shall not dwell with God. Only those who walked with God here shall live and be happy with Him in heaven.

As the enjoyment of God is the heaven of the saints, so the loss of God is the hell of the ungodly.

They also lose all love of God. They lose the inconceivable pleasure of loving Him. Your hearts, sinners, were not warmed by God's love. You never wanted to enjoy Him. You found no delight in speaking or hearing of Him. You would rather have stayed on earth, if you had known how.

They are deprived of the happy company of angels and perfected saints. Now, you are shut out of that company from which you first shut out yourselves. You did not like God's people. Their holy conversation troubled your consciences. It bothered you to hear them pray or sing praises. Is it any wonder if you be separated from them hereafter? The day is coming when they will trouble you no more. Between them and you will be a great gulf. Even in this life, while the saints had their personal imperfections, the Holy Spirit testified that they were men "of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb. 11:38). Much more unworthy will the world be of their fellowship in heaven.

The understanding of the ungodly will be cleared to know the worth of that which they have lost. Now they do not care about losing God, for they do not know His excellence. They now think that their honors, pleasures, wealth, health, and life are worth more than the things of the heavenly world. But when these things have been left behind, they will experience that which before they only read and heard. They would not believe that they could drown until they were in the sea. They would not believe that fire burns until they were cast into it. When they experience it, then they will easily believe. All that error of mind will be removed by experience. Poor souls! They would be comparatively happy, if their understandings were completely taken from them. If they knew no more in hell than they did on earth, their loss would be less troublesome. How happy they would be if they did not know there was such a place as heaven. Now, when their knowledge would help to prevent such future misery, they will not know, nor will they read or study that they might know. Therefore, when their knowledge will but add to their misery, they shall know, whether they want to or not.

When they suddenly find themselves in the land of darkness, shut out of the presence of God forever, then they will roar out these forced confessions, "O my misery! O my folly! O my inconceivable, irrecoverable loss!"

A hard heart now makes heaven and hell seem but trifles. But when these dead souls are revived, *how violently will they blame themselves.* How happy they would be then

if they could sleep out their execution as they did the sermons that warned them of it! But their stupidity is gone.

Now they have no time to consider their eternal destiny; but then they shall have nothing else to do. It will torment them to think of the greatness of the glory they have lost. It will pain them to think of the possibility they once had of obtaining it. They will remember, "Time was when I had the same opportunity of entering the kingdom as others. If I had believed in Christ, I might now have had possession of the inheritance." It will wound them to think; "I had the help of the Holy Spirit and was almost resolved to follow Christ and forsake the world. I was almost persuaded to be a real Christian. How my heart was moved when a faithful minister pressed home the truth! O how close I was to heaven! I almost had it, and yet I have lost it!"

It will add to their calamity to *remember how often they were persuaded to receive Christ*. "With what love and compassion did the minister beseech me and yet I just made fun of him. How often he opened to me my very heart, and yet I was unwilling to know the worst about myself. Christ stood knocking one Sunday after another, crying to me, 'Open your heart to your Savior, and I will come in and have fellowship with you, and you with me' (Revelation 3:20). Why do you delay?"

It will also be cutting to remember on what easy terms they could have escaped their misery. "The yoke was easy and the burden light" which Christ would have put upon them (Matt. 11:30). It was but to repent and cordially accept Him for their Savior. "Ah," thinks the poor tormented wretch, "how justly do I suffer all this, who would not do so little to avoid it! Where was my mind when I neglected that gracious offer? What if Christ had asked me to do something difficult? Would I not have done it? How much more, when He only said, 'Believe and be saved. Seek my face, and your soul shall live.' O gracious offer! O easy terms! O cursed wretch, that would not be persuaded to accept them!"

Their misery will also be increased to remember for what they sold their eternal welfare. When they compare the value of the pleasures of sin with the value of the eternal felicity, their thoughts will tear their hearts. They will exclaim, "Did I sell my soul for such a cheap price? Did I part with my God for a little dirt, and sell my Savior, as Judas did, for a little silver? What a mad exchange I made. What if I had gained the whole world, and lost my soul? It was but a small part of the world for which I gave up heaven."

It will add yet more to their torment, when they consider that *they paid so much for their own destruction*. O the labor it costs sinners to be damned! Sobriety, with health and comfort, they could have enjoyed at a cheaper rate; yet they chose drunkenness, poverty, shame, and sickness. Contentment they might have had, yet they chose covetousness and ambition with the accompanying worries and fears. "If I had done as much for heaven as I did for hell, I surely would have obtained it. Had I loved Christ as strongly as I did my pleasures and popularity and profit, how happy I would have been then and now! How justly do I suffer hell for buying it so expensively rather than to have heaven which was purchased by Christ and offered so freely to me."

O that God would persuade you, reader, to consider these thoughts now, rather than waiting until they torment you in hell.

Why do multitudes fail to repent when they could be forgiven? It is because they *think* they are forgiven already. If you could ask thousands in hell what madness brought them there, most would answer, "We thought we were sure of being saved. We thought we were Christians already." Reader, I must in faithfulness warn you of this delusion. It is Satan's strategy to lead people blindfolded into hell. Never was a thief more careful lest he awaken the people whose home he is burglarizing, than Satan is not to awaken a sinner.

Why do you tremble at the signs of almighty power and wrath—when lightning flashes and thunder crashes, or at the power of tornadoes and earthquakes? Why are you frightened by dread diseases? Why are you concerned with such small sufferings which strike you here—a toothache, an illness, or a falling into disgrace? All these together would be a happy condition compared with what is suffered in hell.

And now, reader, I ask your decision. What use will you make of all this? Will you throw away this book and say it is only about hell and damnation? Would you rather that we didn't tell you these things? Should we keep secret that which God has commanded us to make known? This kind of writing is not popular, but consider whether these things be true. If not, I would certainly agree with you that we should not frighten people without a cause. But if these warnings are the Word of God, then how foolish we would be to ignore them!

If you could not escape hell, it would be useless to tell you about it; but as long as you are alive there is hope. I don't think you need any more *words*. Right now you can make the decision to commit yourself completely to Christ. Let it be done immediately, that I may see your face in rest among the saints. May the Lord persuade you to make this covenant with God without further delay.

The Necessity of Seeking the Saints' Rest

Why don't people seek this wonderful rest more enthusiastically? You would think that if a person heard even once about such a tremendous possibility, and if he believed what he heard, that he would almost forget to eat and drink, and would care for nothing else but how to secure this treasure. And yet people who hear of it daily and profess to believe it as a fundamental article of their faith, act as if they had never heard of any such thing, or did not believe a word of it. They hardly talk about it, work for it, or think about it. And this is true not only of the worldly-minded, but even of devout Christians.

Of course, the WORLDLY-MINDED are absorbed with seeking the things below. They don't have time to seek this heavenly rest. They think of their contriving and striving to climb a step higher in the world than their brethren, while they neglect the eternal kingdom. They pursue pleasure with a passion, but regard the praising of God and the joy of the angels as boring. How careful they are to raise their children to succeed and to increase their possessions, but they don't stop to think whether they will be successful in the judgment. What early rising and working late, year after year, to make a living for themselves and their children, until they die; but what little thought they give to what shall follow.

What has this world done for its lovers and friends, that it is so eagerly followed, while Christ and heaven are neglected? The common entrance into this world is through anguish and travail. The passage through it is with continual worry and work. The exit is the sharpest of all. O deluded people, will laughter and pleasure stay with you forever? Will gold and earthly glory prove dependable friends in the time of your greatest need? Will they hear your cries in the day of tragedy? At the hour of your death, will they either answer or relieve you? Will they go along with you to the other world, and bribe the Judge, and get you off free? Will they purchase you a place among the redeemed? Oh, deceitful world, you flattered me in my prosperity, but now you abandon me in my time of need. If I had as faithfully served Christ as I have served you, He would not have left me helpless.

If every door were marked where families do not, morning and evening, sincerely seek the Lord in prayer, and if the Lord's wrath were poured out upon such prayerless families, our cities would be as places overcome by fatal epidemics. Try to persuade the average person to read good books, to sanctify the Lord's day in prayer, worship, and hearing God's Word. He would consider it a tedious life, as if he thought heaven were not worth that much.

Even the PEOPLE WHO PROFESS TO BELIEVE show a lack of heavenly mindedness. They may preach, or hear, or read, or talk of heaven, and pray with their families, and support good causes. They may desire to be associated with the godly. Still, they shun more spiritual duties, such as being fervent in private prayer and meditation, in conscientious self-examination, in loving and sincerely forgiving an enemy, in putting others before themselves, and in committing all they have, or do, to Christ. The Gospel influences only the *surface* of their souls. Such people are usually bold when it comes to opinions, though basically ignorant. They are usually conceited dealers in

controversies, rather than humble embracers of known truth. Seldom talking with seriousness and humility of the great things of Christ, they show that their religion dwells in their brains, and not in their hearts. The wind of temptation carries them away as a feather, because their hearts are not stabilized with Christ and grace. They never, in private conversation, humbly admit their spiritual weaknesses or tenderly acknowledge their inattentiveness to Christ; but they pride themselves in being of a certain persuasion or party.

The HYPOCRITE'S MIND may tell him that God is the chief good, but his emotions have not affirmed it. The world has more of his love than God, and therefore it is his god. He will hold to the opinion which will best serve his worldly advantage. How weak he is in private prayer. How superficial in meditation, how empty in walking with God, rejoicing in Him, and desiring Him.

Even the godly are too LAZY when it comes to seeking their everlasting rest. We trifle away our time. What a frozen stupidity has benumbed us! We are dying, and we know it; yet we stir not. We do not make our eternal state the business of our lives. If I were not sick myself of the same disease, with what tears would I mix this ink in grieving over this universal deadness.

How few are the PASTORS who are serious in their work. Do we yearn to help the ignorant, careless, obstinate masses of people? When we look them in the face, do our hearts melt for them, lest we should never see their faces in rest? Doesn't sinful over-cautiousness diminish our fervor, and make our sermons dull on subjects that should be piercing? How mildly do we handle those sins which will so cruelly handle our people's souls? May the Lord pardon the great sin of the ministry in this timidity, and, in particular, my own.

How about the LAY PEOPLE? Are they more serious than the pastors? How can we expect them to be? Reader, ask yourself the question—have you set your eternal rest before your eyes as the great business you have to do in this world?

O blessed rest, how unworthily are you neglected! O glorious kingdom, how undervalued you are! We can never do too much with heaven in mind. No one can obey or serve God too much. We may easily do too much for the world, but we cannot for God.

The wisdom of God has ordered us to be diligent in seeking heaven. The best of CHRISTIANS, AT DEATH, lament their negligence. When people complain that we are too strict on this point, whom do they accuse, God or us? Who knows the way to heaven better than the God of heaven? "Strive to enter in at the straight gate" (Luke 13:24). "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Eccles. 9:10). "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10).

When Christians come to die, they wish, "O that I had been a thousand times more holy, more heavenly, more faithful in my labors for the Lord. The world accuses me for doing too much, but my own conscience accuses me for doing too little."

Rest must always follow *labor*. As actors upon a stage portraying a battle, differ from soldiers fighting for their lives, so hypocrites differ from serious Christians.

Earnestness reveals our sincerity. Isn't it sensible to exert ourselves to the uttermost in obedience to God?

God is in earnest with you; why shouldn't you be so with Him? He was serious in His judgments. Was He not in earnest when He drowned the world, when He consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, and when He scattered the Jews? Is it time, then, to trifle with God? Jesus Christ was serious in purchasing our redemption. The Holy Spirit is serious in dealing with us. He is grieved when we resist Him. God is serious in hearing our prayers. He suffers with us. He regards every groan and sigh, and puts every tear into His bottle (Psalm 56:8). When you are in serious trouble, you pray earnestly! Shall we then be superficial in the work of God?

And now, reader, having provided these arguments, I charge you, in the name of God, to make your decision. Will you yield obedience or not? I am confident that your conscience is convinced of your duty. Do you now dare to go on in the careless, lazy way, living as loosely, sinning as boldly, and praying as seldom as before? If you had seen heaven opened, as Stephen did, and all the saints there triumphing in victory, what a life you would lead after such a vision! If you had possessed the glory of heaven but one year, what ambition you would have now. "What, manner of people ought you to be—in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2 Pet. 3:11). I charge you, Christian, in your Master's name, to let your *life* answer that question as well as your *lips*.

The Title to the Saints' Rest

If there is such a glorious rest awaiting only the people of God, why do most people neglect the certainty of their title to it? What strange madness is it that allows people to live happily while uncertain of their destiny? I would think that we would want above all else to be fully assured of our being heirs of the kingdom. If a person has a law suit against him, how anxious he is to know whether it will go for or against him. If a person is to be tried for his life in an earthly court, how eager he is to know whether he will be acquitted or condemned. If a person is dangerously ill, he will inquire, of the physician, "What do you think; shall I live or not?" But in the supreme matter of salvation, many are content to be uncertain.

If you ask of most men "a reason of the hope that is in them, (1 Peter 3:15) they will say, "Because God is merciful." If God or man should say to one of them, "Friend, what is the state of your soul? Is it born again and forgiven?" He would answer like Cain, "I know not; am I my soul's keeper?" His flippant attitude is, "I'll leave it all to God." That is like a skipper saying, "I will trust God with my ship and leave it to the rocks and waves and winds." What horrible abuse of God this is, to pretend to trust God, while covering up our own voluntary negligence. If you really trusted God, you would also be ruled by Him, and trust Him in His own appointed way. Wouldn't he be a foolish traveler who would stay on a certain road when he does not know whether it is the right road, and comfort himself by saying, "I hope I am right; I will go on, and trust in God?"

No wonder you are an enemy to plain preaching. No wonder you say of the minister, as Ahab of the prophet Elijah, "I hate him; for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (1 Kings 22:8).

The way to conquer uncertainty is self-examination. It is the serious and sincere trying of a person's life by the rule of Scripture. Go through a congregation of a thousand members, and how few of them will you find that ever spent one hour in all their lives in a close examination of their title to heaven. Ask your own conscience, reader, when was the time, and where was the place, that you ever solemnly took your heart to task, and examined it by Scripture? Did you ever find out if it was really renewed or not, whether it was truly holy or not, whether it cared most for God or lesser things, whether it was focused more on heaven or earth? Did you follow up this examination and pass sentence on yourself accordingly?

Scripture shows that the certainty of salvation may be attained. We ought to *know* if we are saved. Scripture bids us "give diligence to make our calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10); and earnestly urges us to examine, prove, and know our own selves, whether we be in the faith and whether Jesus Christ be in us, or we be reprobates (2 Cor. 13:5).

Among the many hindrances which keep men from self-examination, SATAN will do his part. He doesn't want the godly to have the joy, assurance, and strength against temptation, which the faithful performance of self-examination would provide. As for the ungodly, he knows how to angle for souls better than to show them the hook and

line, or frighten them away with a noise, or with his own appearance. Therefore he works secretly to keep them from examining themselves.

Some scoff at self-examination. "What," say they, "do you doubt your salvation, when you have lived so well, and done nobody any harm? God is merciful. If such as you are not saved, what will become of all your friends and neighbors who live as you do?" So the WORLD cries, "Don't worry about these things." Consider, however, that it is Christ, and not your neighbors or friends, that must judge you at last. If Christ condemns you, these people cannot save you. Therefore, it is not from the words of ignorant men, but from the Word of God, that you should gain your hope of salvation.

The greatest hindrances are in men's OWN HEARTS. Some are so ignorant that they don't know what self-examination is. They don't realize there is any important difference between one person and another, but think that we are all Christians. Some are so full of self-love and pride, that they will not even suspect they are in danger. They are like pampering parents who will not believe that their spoiled children could do any wrong. Some are so in love with sin, and so dislike the way of God, that they don't dare examine themselves, lest they be forced to change. Some are so resolved never to change their present way of living that they neglect self-examination as useless. They would rather risk eternity than seek a new way. Many are so busy in the world that they cannot take the time to test their title to heaven. Some are so lazy that they will not be bothered with it. But the most common and dangerous obstruction is 'false hope' which keeps a person from suspecting his danger.

As in a house where nothing is in its proper place, it will be difficult to find what is needed, so it is in the heart where all things are in disorder. It is difficult for a person to examine himself impartially. Like a bribed judge who has already made up his mind which way the case shall go, people are partial to their own cause. They think their great sins small, and overlook their small sins completely.

Some hindrances keep even true Christians from blessed assurance. Sometimes they *mistake assurance for the joy* that commonly accompanies it. If they don't feel the joy, they fear they don't have the salvation. This is like a child who thinks himself a son only while he sees the smiles of his father's face, or hears the comforting words of his mouth. Does he cease to be the child of his father, just because the father's smiles and soft words cease?

Christians need to realize that their comfort comes from the promises of God. They must draw comfort as often as they need it, by daily and diligently meditating upon the promises.

Another cause of distress is the secret *harboring of some known sin*. God has put a gulf between sin and peace. As long as you cherish your pride, your love of the world, the desires of the flesh, or any unchristian practice, you won't feel the comforting peace of God within.

Grace is only apparent to the soul while it is in action. When it is not in action it is like a musical instrument, well tuned, but making no more music than a piece of wood lying alone. When it is played by a skillful musician, the melody is delightful. So also, some degree of comfort follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire. A man

that is spiritually cold should work until heat be kindled; so he that lacks assurance must not stand still, but exercise his graces until his doubts vanish.

The lack of assurance in the soul is sometimes caused by *physical weakness*. A conscientious Christian, while under mental depression or physical weakness, may doubt, despair, and fear. This is no more unusual than for a sick man to groan, or a child to cry when spanked. The physician may be needed instead of the pastor, when people cry out about sin and the wrath of God, while the chief cause is their physical or mental illness.

Faithful self-examination will have pleasant results. Isn't it desirable to know what will come to us hereafter, and what place and state we must be in forever? What sweet thoughts you will have of God. All His power and justice which is the terror of others will be your joy. How welcome will the Word of God be to you. How sweet will His promises be when you are sure they are your own. The very threatenings will comfort you, to remember that you have escaped them. What boldness you may then have in prayer, when you can say, "Our Father," in full assurance. It will make the Lord's Supper a refreshing feast to your soul. How lively will it make you in the work of the Lord.

Perhaps you say, "I don't know how to examine myself." I am now going to give you some DIRECTIONS.

Bow down before God in sincere prayer, desiring the assistance of His Spirit to show you the plain truth of your condition.

Choose the most convenient time and place. Let the place be the most private, and the time when you have nothing to interrupt you; and, if possible, let it be the present time.

Have available, either in memory or writing, some Scriptures, containing the descriptions of the saints and the gospel terms of salvation.

Proceed then to put the question to yourself. If your heart tries to escape the work, force it on.

When you have discovered your true condition, pass sentence on yourself accordingly; either that you are a true Christian, or that you are not. Don't pass sentence rashly, either with self-flattery or with pessimistic perfectionism.

Write this sentence, at least in your memory—"At such a time, upon thorough examination, I found my condition to be such and such." Such a record will be very useful to you hereafter.

Now let me add two criteria by which you may determine your title to the saints' everlasting rest. First, taking God for your primary good; and secondly, accepting Christ for your only Savior and Lord. Every soul that has a title to this rest places his chief happiness in God. This rest consists in the full enjoyment of God. Do you truly consider it to be your primary happiness to enjoy the Lord in glory? Though the flesh will be pleading for its own delights, and the world will be creeping into your affections, yet in your prevailing judgment and true interests, do you prefer God

above all things in the world? Do you make Him the very aim of your desires and efforts?

If God should set before you an eternity of earthly pleasure on the one hand, and the saints' rest on the other, and invite you to take your choice, would you refuse the world and choose this rest? Or, do you prefer in your heart, worldly happiness before God? Though your tongue may say that God is your chief happiness, yet your heart may not so esteem Him; for the world may truly be the principle aim of your desires and efforts. The life to come may have little of your care or work. You are not attracted to the unseen glory of another world, nor would you do anything at all for heaven if you knew how to keep the world. If God would give you permission to live on the earth with health and wealth forever, you would think it better than heaven's rest. If this is your condition, then you are still an unregenerate person. You are not born again, and you have no title to the saints' rest.

As you take God for your chief good, so you must sincerely accept Christ for your only Savior and Lord, to bring you to this heavenly rest. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31). Do you sincerely consent that Christ alone shall be your Savior? Have you stopped trusting in your works to save you? Are you trusting in the redemption made by Christ? Are you also content to take Him for your only Lord and King, to govern and guide you by His laws and Spirit? Are you willing to obey Him even when He commands the hardest of duties and those which are most contrary to the desires of your flesh? Are you sorry when you break your resolution, but happy when you stay in close obedience to Him? Would you not change your Lord and Master for all the world? This is the way it is with every true Christian.

But if you are a hypocrite, then it is different. You may call Christ your Lord and Savior, but you never found yourself so lost without Him as to drive you to seek Him and trust Him, and to lay your salvation on Him alone. At least, you never sincerely consented that He should govern you as your Lord. Of course, you are willing to be saved from hell by Christ when you die; but, in the meantime, you don't want Him to command you anymore than will agree with your pleasures and worldly desires.

Observe, it is the *consent* of the heart, or *will*, which I ask you to examine. I do not ask whether you have *assurance* of salvation. I do not even ask whether you can believe that your sins are pardoned. These are not a part of justifying faith. They are the fruits of it. They are *results* of faith. Do not say, "I cannot believe that my sins are pardoned, and therefore I am not a true Christian." This is a most common mistake. The question is, whether you sincerely accept Christ in order that you may be pardoned, reconciled to God, and so saved. Do you consent that He shall be your Lord who has bought you, and that He shall bring you to heaven in His own way? This is justifying, saving faith. This is the test by which to examine yourself. Yet still observe that all this consent must be sincere and real, not pretended or acted out with reservations.

If Christians want comforts that will not deceive them, let them make it the endeavor of their lives to grow in grace, to strengthen and increase the interest of Christ in their souls. The promise is not to every one that presumes to believe, but "to him that overcomes, will Christ give to eat of the hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17). He shall eat "of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7), and "shall not be hurt of the second death" (Rev. 2:11). He will grant to him to sit with him on

His throne, even as He also overcame, and is set down with His Father on His throne (Revelation 3:21).

The Duty of Helping Others to Seek the Saints' Rest

Has God set before us such a wonderful possession as the saints' everlasting rest, and made us capable of such unimaginable happiness? Why, then, don't all of the children of this kingdom exert themselves more to help others to enjoy it? We see the glory of the kingdom, while others around us do not. We see the misery of those that are out of it, while others do not. And yet we will not seriously show them their danger and help to bring them into this eternal life. How few Christians there are who give themselves with all their might to save souls! Considering how important this duty is to the glory of God and the happiness of men, I will first show *how* to do it.

Our hearts must be moved by the misery of other people. We must be compassionate towards them. If we earnestly longed for their conversion, and sincerely desired the best for them; it would put us to work, and God would bless such effort.

We must **take every opportunity** that we can to instruct others in the way of salvation. Teach them their need of the Redeemer; how Christ mercifully bore their penalty on the cross. Teach them the privileges which believers have in Christ. Show them how wonderful heaven will be. Be sure to urge them to make use of all the ways God has provided for our help—such as hearing and reading the Bible, calling upon God in prayer, and having fellowship with other Christians. Persuade them to forsake sin, avoid temptations and evil companions.

Aim at the glory of God in another person's salvation. Don't do it for your own credit or to attract followers; but do it in obedience to Christ and out of tender love for other people's souls. Do it promptly too. That physician is no better than a murderer, who negligently delays treating a patient until he is dead or incurable. Let others perceive that it is your desire to help them; that you have no other motive in mind but their everlasting happiness. Say to them, "Friend, you know I have nothing to gain in this. The easiest way to please you and keep your friendship would be to say nothing and leave you alone; but love will not let me see you perish, and remain silent. I only seek your own happiness. You are the one who will gain if you come to Christ."

Do it plainly and faithfully. Don't play down the seriousness of their sins, nor give them false hopes. If you see their situation is dangerous, speak plainly. Say to them, "Friend, if you were 'in Christ,' you would be 'a new creature; old things' would be 'passed away, and all things' would 'become new' (2 Cor. 5:17). You would have new thoughts, new friends, and a new life." Thus you must deal honestly with people, if you ever intend to help them. It is not in pleasing people that you help them.

Do it seriously, enthusiastically, and effectively. Try to make people know that heaven and hell are not matters to be played with, or dismissed with a few careless thoughts. To avoid extremes, I advise you to do it with discretion. Choose the most appropriate time. Don't deal with people when they are angry or on the defensive. When the earth is soft the plough will enter. Take a person when he is in trouble, or when he is freshly moved by a sermon. Christian faithfulness requires us to watch for opportunities.

Let all your words be backed with the authority of God. Let sinners be convinced that you do not speak merely your own thoughts. They may reject *your* opinions even though they would not dare reject the words of the Almighty. Try to bring all of your conversation to a verdict. God usually blesses those whose hearts are set upon the conversion of their hearers and who therefore seek a decision.

Be sure your *life witnesses as well as your words*. Let people see you practicing what you seek to persuade them about. Let them see, by your attitude toward heaven and the world, that you do indeed believe what you would have them believe.

Besides privately witnessing, you should try to help people through the church. Use your influence to secure faithful ministers, for "how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14). Many souls may be saved by the ministry which you have helped to secure for the church. What immense good might men of means do, if they would support the ministerial education of carefully chosen youth until they were ready for the ministry. You can also draw people to attend the services where faithful ministers preach the Gospel. Do your part to keep the church and its ministry in good repute, for no one will be affected much by that which he disdains. The apostle urged, concerning those who are over us in the Lord, "to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:13).

CAUSES OF THE GROSS NEGLECT OF WITNESSING

If we know the causes we may more easily overcome them. One hindrance is ***sin***. A person's own guilt makes him ashamed to witness. If a person is not excited about heavenly delights, why would he try to draw others enthusiastically to seek them?

Another hindrance is a ***secret lack of faith***. If we truly believed that the unsaved would be eternally separated from God, how could we keep from speaking, or even avoid bursting into tears, when we look them in the face; especially when they are our dear friends? Were it not for this cursed unbelief, our own and our neighbors' souls would benefit from more active witnessing.

A ***lack of compassion*** is a further cause of neglect. Unlike the Good Samaritan, we pass by the wounded man. What difference does it make that the sinner, wounded by sin and enslaved by Satan, does not want your help? His misery cries aloud just the same. If God had not heard the cry of our misery before He heard the cry of our prayers, we would have stayed in sin's slavery ourselves. You will pray to God for the conversion of other people; why not talk to them about it, if you desire it? And if you do not desire it, why do you pray for it?

We are also hindered from witnessing by a ***desire to be popular***. We are so eager to please people that it makes us neglect our duty to them. He is a foolish and unfaithful medical doctor who will let a sick man die for fear of troubling him. If our friends are mentally ill, we do not let them hurt themselves, even if stopping them causes them to dislike us. And yet when they are beside themselves so far as salvation is concerned, rushing madly on to damnation; we will not stop them for fear of displeasing them. How can we "love the praise of men more than the praise of God"? (John 12:43). If we "seek to please men, we shall not be the servants of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

It is common to be hindered by **sinful bashfulness**. When we should shame men out of their sins, we are ourselves ashamed of our duty. Sinners do not blush to swear, be drunk, or neglect the worship of God; and yet we blush to talk with them about it. It is wrong to be shy in emergencies. Shall we be too bashful to shout, "Fire!" when we discover the auditorium is in flames? It is not a work to be ashamed of, to obey God in persuading people to turn from their sins to Christ.

A lazy and impatient spirit hinders us also. Sometimes witnessing makes people our enemies. Besides, it seldom succeeds instantly, but needs follow-up. Therefore we need patience. What if God had been as impatient with us as we are with others?

With many, **pride** is a hindrance. They would be glad to be the one who might lead a distinguished person to Christ, but they overlook the poor masses, as if the souls of all were not alike to God. These men fail to consider how low Christ stooped to us!

With others it is **ignorance** of the duty that hinders them from doing it. Either they don't know it is a duty, or they figure it is not *their* duty. If this be your case, reader, I hope you are now aware of your duty and will act accordingly. Do not excuse yourself by saying, "This will make us all preachers." Every good Christian is a teacher and must minister to others in the name of the Lord. Every man is a physician, when a regular medical doctor is not available and when the injury is so small that anyone can give first aid. Similarly, every man must be a teacher. Do not give up before trying. Cannot God give you success?

Here are some REASONS FOR WITNESSING. Consider what Christ did towards the saving of souls. He thought them worth His blood; and shall we not think them worth our breath? Will you not do a little where Christ has done so much? It was God's argument to the Israelites to be kind to strangers, because they themselves had been "strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:19). So should you pity those who are strangers to Christ, because you were once strangers to Him yourself.

We have had, in the days of our ignorance, our friends in sin whom we encouraged in their evil ways. Does it not become us to do as much to save others as we have done to destroy them? The devil is tempting them day and night; their inner lusts are still working for their ruin; their worldly friends are increasing their contempt for holiness. If no one will be diligent in helping them to heaven, what will become of them?

My own experience is, that when I have been near death, my conscience has accused me more for neglect of this duty than for any other sin. Every uninformed, unsaved neighbor would come to my memory, to whom I never made known their danger. Conscience would remind me how I had been with the unsaved at various times and had opportunity to speak with them about Christ, but did not. The Lord grant that I may better obey conscience while I have time, that it may have less about which to accuse me at death.

Consider the HAPPY RESULTS of this work when it is faithfully done. You may be instrumental in saving souls, for whom Christ came down and died, and in whom the angels of God rejoice. Such souls will bless you here and hereafter. Say to yourself, as the lepers of Samaria said, "We do not well—this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace" (2 Kings 7:9).

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES TO WITNESS

Physicians, for example, have a special advantage in that they are with people in sickness and danger. The ear is more open, and the heart less stubborn, than in the time of health. Men look upon their physician as a person in whose hands is their life, or, at least, who may do much to help them. Therefore, they will regard his advice seriously. You that are of this honorable profession, do not think this to be a work outside of your calling, as if it belonged only to ministers. Help to prepare your patients for heaven. Teach them both how to live and die, and point them to the remedy for their souls as you do for their bodies. Thank God that many of the chief physicians of our day are good witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Men of wealth and authority also have excellent advantages for witnessing. Did you not receive all your honor and riches from God? Doesn't Christ say, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required?" (Luke 12:48). Use your influence to help your subordinates. Visit in their homes; see whether they worship God in their families. Don't look down on them. Remember, "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). Let people see that you excel others, not alone in honor and wealth, but in compassion and diligence in God's work. You are already an exceptional person, and if you show yourself to be a faithful witness of Christ, I admit that you will be even more unusual; but in this case you will be exceptional in godly character. You will be a "millionaire" in ministering, a "billionaire" in blessings. You will indeed be a special person, for few of the mighty and noble are called (1 Cor. 1:26).

As for **ministers** of the gospel, it is the very purpose of their calling to help others to heaven. Be sure to make it the main goal of your studies and preaching. He is the able, skillful minister, that is best skilled in the art of winning souls. That is the best sermon that is best in instructing, convincing, persuading, and consequently, of winning people to Christ. Preach with seriousness and enthusiasm, as men who believe what they preach. Learn of Paul, not only to teach your people "publicly," but "from house to house" (Acts 20:20). See whether they worship God in their families, and teach them how to do it. If any be ignorant, it may be your fault as much as theirs. Be not asleep while the wolf is prowling. Don't pussyfoot with any. Some will not tell their people plainly of their sins, because these people are distinguished or devoutly religious; as if none but the poor and the wicked should be dealt with plainly. Study and pray, and pray and study, until you become "a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," (2 Tim. 2:15), that your people may not be ashamed nor weary in hearing you. Let your *behavior* teach men as well as your *beliefs*.

Aim after unity and peace. Minister in a peaceful and loving way. It is as hard to maintain in your people a heavenly attitude amid quarreling, as it is to keep a candle lit in a fierce storm.

I would also persuade all whom God has **entrusted with the care of children** to give themselves to this great work of helping others to the heavenly rest. God plainly commands it. "These words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart—and you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:6-7). "Train up a child in the way he should go—and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Bring up your children "in the

nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Joshua resolved, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). And God himself says of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. 18:19).

Consider how near your children are to you. They are part of yourself. If they prosper when you are dead, you view it as if you lived and prospered in them. Should you not feel the same way about their everlasting rest? God has made your children your charge. You have a greater influence on your own family than any minister does. The things you must teach them are contrary to the interests and desires of their flesh. They have hereditary diseases bred in their nature. May the Lord make you realize what an important and challenging responsibility you have toward your children.

Consider what sorrow you prepare for yourself if you neglect your children. If you and your children die in your sins, how will they cry out against you in hell. What an addition to your misery will their cries be. On the other hand, think what a comfort you may have if you are faithful in this duty. The greatest joy will be when you shall say, "Lord, here am I, and the children you have given me;" and shall joyfully live with them forever. Consider also how much the welfare of the church and state depends on this duty. Good laws will not reform us, if reformation does not begin at home.

Think about the advantages you have in promoting the salvation of your children. They are with you while they are tender and flexible. You have a twig to bend, not an oak. None in the world have such an interest in their welfare as you have, and you have the greatest authority over them. Their whole dependence is upon you for their support. You know their disposition and interests. You are with them and have many opportunities to influence them. Especially you, mothers, who are with your children more, while young, than their fathers are. What you suffer to bring them into the world! What care you take of their bodies. Will you not be at as much pains for the saving of their souls?

I conclude with this earnest request to all Christian parents who read these lines, that they be faithful to the great trust God has given them. If you cannot do what you would *like* for your children, then at least do what you *can*. Both the church and the state, the city and the nation, groan under the neglect of this important responsibility. Your children are like Moses in the bulrushes, ready to perish if they don't receive help. If you are not willing to do it, now that you know it to be so great a duty; you are rebels, and not true subjects of Jesus Christ. If you are willing, but don't know how; I will add a few words of direction to help you.

Lead your children, by your own example, to prayer and reading of the Bible. Keep their consciences tender. Teach them gracious speech. Watch over their behavior. Get them Bibles and Christian books, and see that they read them. Examine them often as to what they learn. Especially spend the Lord's day in this work, instead of sports and idleness. Show them the meaning of what they read. Instruct them out of the Holy Scriptures. Keep them out of evil company, and acquaint them with Christian friends. Especially show them the necessity and pleasure of serving God.

The Possession of the Saints' Rest Is Not on Earth

We have not yet come to our resting place. How foolish it is to expect it here. What Christian doesn't deserve this correction? All of us would like continual prosperity, because it is so pleasing to the flesh; but we don't consider how unreasonable such a desire is. When we enjoy lovely homes, money, property, and income, or even the necessary means which God has appointed for our spiritual welfare, we are inclined to seek rest in these enjoyments. Do we not desire earthly delights more than God himself? If we lose them, it troubles us more than our loss of God. Is it not enough that these things can be aids on our way to heaven, but must they become our heaven itself? Christian reader, I would rather make you aware of this sin than of any other sin in the world, if I could; for God has a complaint against us on this very point. In order to do this, I urge you to consider THE REASONABLENESS OF PRESENT TROUBLES, and THE UNREASONABLENESS OF RESTING IN PRESENT ENJOYMENTS, and also our unwillingness to die in order that we may possess eternal rest.

Consider that trouble and work are the common way to rest. The day for work is first and then follows the night for rest. Why should we desire the order of grace to be upset any more than the order of nature? It is a divine law, "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22); and that "if we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). What are we, that God's rules should be reversed at our whim?

Troubles are useful to us, to keep us from mistaking our rest. The most dangerous error of our souls is to replace God with what God has *created*. A similar error is to mistake earth for heaven. What warm affections we have toward the world until troubles cool them. Troubles speak forcefully, and will be heard even when preachers are not.

Troubles are God's most effective means of keeping us from losing our way to our eternal rest. Without this hedge of thorns on the right hand and the left, we would hardly stay on the road to heaven. If there be but one gap in the hedge, how ready we are to find it and slip through it. When we grow wild, worldly, or proud, how quickly can sickness or other trouble bring us to our knees! Every Christian, as well as Martin Luther, may call trouble one of the best school teachers, and, with David, may say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray—but now have I kept your word" (Ps. 119:67). Not only the green pastures and still waters, but the rod and staff, "they comfort me" (Ps. 23:4). Though the Word and Spirit do the main work, yet suffering unlocks the door of the heart, so that the Word enters more easily.

Consider, further, that it is the flesh that is mainly troubled by afflictions. Didn't Paul and Silas sing when their feet were in the stocks? Their *spirits* were not imprisoned. Don't grumble about God's dealings with your body. He doesn't do it because He lacks love for you; for if that were the case, He would not have dealt that way with all His saints before you. Don't expect your body to understand the meaning of the rod. It will say God is destroying you, when He is saving you. The flesh is not fit to be judge; it is the accused! Could we stop our ears to our body and listen to God and His Word, we would have a better understanding of our troubles.

God seldom gives His people so sweet a foretaste of their future rest as in their deep troubles. When did Christ preach such comfort to His disciples as when their hearts were troubled? (John 14). When did He appear among them and say, "Peace be unto you" (John 20:21), but when they were hiding for fear of the Jews? (John 20:19). When did Stephen see heaven opened, but when he was giving up his life for the testimony of Jesus (Acts 7:55-56)? Is it not our best condition when we have most of God? Why else do we desire to come to heaven?

Don't say, "I could bear any other trouble but this." If God had troubled you where you could bear it, your idol would not have been discovered nor removed. And don't say, "If my trouble did not disable me from doing my duty, I could bear it." As for your duty to others, it is not your duty when God disables you.

To be the soul's rest is God's own privilege. To make anything less than God the basis of our rest is gross idolatry. Of course, it is *obvious* idolatry to place our rest in riches or popularity, but it is a more subtle and refined idolatry to take up our rest in spiritual exercises. How it must offend our dear Lord when we give Him cause to charge, "My people can find rest in anything rather than in me. They can delight in one another, but not in Me. They would rather be anywhere than be with Me. Are these their gods? Have these redeemed them? Will these be better to them than I have been?"

God gave you enjoyments to refresh you on your journey to heaven. All God's mercies here are not that rest—as John the Baptist professed he was not the Christ—but he was a "voice crying in the wilderness," to bid us prepare, because the kingdom of God, our true rest, "is at hand" (John 1:8; Matthew 3:1-3).

Any time we love God's gifts better than God himself, we put God in a position of denying the blessings we request, or of taking them away from us. If you had an employee in your home whom your wife loved better than she loved you, would you not be unhappy with your wife and rid your home of such an employee? So also, if the Lord sees that you begin to settle in the world, and say, "Here I will rest," no wonder if He soon unsettles you. If He loves you, no wonder He will take that from you with which He sees you are destroying yourself. It has long been my observation of many, that when they have attempted great projects, and have just finished them; or have aimed at great things in the world, and have just obtained them; and begin to look on their condition with contentment and retire to rest in it; they are then usually near to death or ruin. When a man starts saying, "Soul, take your ease" (Luke 12:19), the next news usually is, "You fool, this night," or this month, or this year, "your soul shall be required of you—then whose shall those things be, which you have provided?" (Luke 12:20). Where is there a home where this fool doesn't live? Let us consider whether it be our own case!

Whether you be a friend to God or an enemy, you can never expect that God will allow you to enjoy your idols undisturbed.

Our rest is our heaven. Where we take our rest, there we make our heaven. If God would let you take up your rest here, it would be a curse to you. It would be better if weariness would make you seek after true rest. Whenever you talk of a rest on earth, it is like Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration wanting to stay there. "Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here," said Peter excitedly; but the Scripture adds, "not

knowing what he said" (Luke 9:33). If nothing else will convince us, surely the remains of sin should. "The sin which does so easily beset us" (Heb. 12:1) should quickly convince the believer that his rest is not here.

The soul's rest must be sufficient to afford it perpetual satisfaction. If God should rain down angel's food, we would soon hate the manna. Our delights on earth grow dull. The more the world is known, the less it satisfies. Can you remember the state that fully satisfied you? If you do you think can, do you think it would continue to satisfy you forever? I believe we may all say of our earthly rest, as Paul of our hope, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19).

It is also a sad mistake when we are content with religious exercises without God, and had rather be at public worship than in heaven, or a member of the church here than of the perfect church above. Let your soul delight in spiritual exercises only so far as God accompanies them. Remember, this is not heaven, but only the down payment. "While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:6), and while we are absent from Him, we are absent from our rest. See that you watch and pray against settling anywhere short of heaven, or resting your soul on anything less than God.

Let us also consider OUR UNREASONABLE RELUCTANCE TO DIE. We linger, like Lot in Sodom, until "the Lord being merciful unto" us, he plucks us away against our will (Genesis 19:16). I admit that death, of itself, is not desirable; but the soul's rest with God is desirable, and death is the common route to it. We are inclined to minimize this sin, so let me be the more emphatic about it and show the remedy for it.

Consider how it shows lack of *faith*. If we really believed that there is such blessedness prepared for believers in heaven, we would be as impatient of living as we are now fearful of dying. Every day would seem like a year until our last day would come. Is it possible that we can truly believe that death will transfer us from misery to glory, and yet be so reluctant to die? Though there is much faith and Christianity in our mouths, yet there is also much faithlessness and atheism in our hearts. That is the main reason we are so unwilling to die.

It is also due to our lack of *love*. If we love a friend, we love his company. His presence is delightful; his absence is painful. Whatever we pretend, if we love either father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend, wealth, or life itself, more than Christ; we are not yet a true disciple (Luke 14:26). When it comes to this test, the question is not who preaches most or talks most, but who *loves* most. Do we love Him and yet care not how long we are absent from Him? If this holy flame of love were thoroughly kindled in our hearts, we would cry out with David, "As the deer pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God—when shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. 42:1-2).

By our unwillingness to die, it appears we are not really very weary of *sin*. If we felt sin to be the greatest evil, we would not be willing to have its company so long. Ah, foolish soul, does every prisoner groan for freedom, and every sick man long for health, and every hungry man for food; and do you alone hate deliverance? Does the farmer desire the harvest, and the worker his pay? Does the traveler long to get home, and the runner to win the race; and are you reluctant to see your labors

finished, and to receive the reward of your faith? O unworthy soul, who would rather dwell in this land of darkness, and wander in this wilderness, than be at rest with Jesus Christ! Has the world lately become more kind? We may at our peril reconcile ourselves to the world, but it will never reconcile itself to us.

This unwillingness to die impeaches us of high treason against the Lord. It is choosing earth before Him, and making present things our very god. Do you expect anyone to believe you when you call the Lord your only hope, and yet would endure the hardest life, rather than die and enter into His presence? What self-contradiction this is. What hypocrisy, to profess to strive for heaven, and be so reluctant to come to it. In this way we disgrace the Lord and His promises in the eyes of the world. When unbelievers see those so unwilling to leave their hold of present things, who have professed to live by faith, and have boasted of their hopes in another world; doesn't this confirm their skepticism? "Surely," they say, "if these Christians expected so much glory, they would not be so reluctant to leave earth for heaven." How can we ever repair the wrong which we do to God and people's souls by this scandal?

What an honor it would be to God, and what a strengthening it would be to believers, and what a conviction to unbelievers it would be, if Christians could cheerfully welcome the news of rest.

Our inability to do so shows that we have wasted our lives. Have we not had all our lifetime to prepare to die; so many years to make ready for one hour; and are we so unready and unwilling yet? What have we been doing? Why have we lived? Did we have any more important matters to mind? Did we need any more frequent warnings? How often death entered the homes of our neighbors. How often it knocked on our own door. How many diseases attacked our own bodies. And are we still unready and unwilling after all this?

One man on his death bed, when he was asked whether he was willing to die or not, replied, "Let him be loathe to die, who is loathe to be with Christ." May that be our conviction also.

The Lord Jesus Christ was willing to come from heaven to earth for us, and shall we be unwilling to remove from earth to heaven for ourselves and Him? Christ came down to raise us up. Has He bought our rest at so costly a price? Is our inheritance "purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28)? And are we, after all this, reluctant to enter? O, listen, it was Christ, and not us, that had cause to be reluctant! May the Lord forgive and heal this foolish ingratitude.

The devil's daily business is to keep our souls from God. What sport this must be to Satan, that, when he sees he cannot get you to hell, he can so long keep you out of heaven, and that his desires, and yours concur on this.

Do not our daily fears of death make our lives a continual worry? Our lives could instead be full of joy in the daily contemplation of the life to come. When we might lie down, and rise up, and walk about with our hearts full of the joys of God, we continually fill them with fears; for he that fears dying must be always fearing, since he always has reason to expect it. How can that man's life be comfortable who lives in continual fear of losing his comforts? These fears of death are self-created sufferings.

Most of us have had sufficient time for life. Why shouldn't a man, that would die at all, be as willing at thirty or forty, if God sees fit, as at seventy or eighty? As you do not covet unlimited wealth or fame, do not desire it in *time* either. Be content with your share of time. Has your life been so sweet that you are reluctant to leave it? Is this your thanks to Him who is thus drawing you to His own sweetness? O foolish soul, I wish you were as eager for eternity as for a perishing life, and for the presence of God in glory as for continuance on earth.

What a number of your own dear friends are now gone. Why should you be so unwilling to follow? Hasn't Jesus Christ Himself gone this way? Has He not sanctified the grave to us? Are you even reluctant to follow HIM?

The reason I have said so much on this subject is that I find it so needful to myself and others. I find so few Christians that can willingly die. I find Christians who will work hard and suffer much for Christ and who conquer other weaknesses, but so few that have conquered this unwillingness to depart and be with Christ.

The Suburbs of Heaven

If there is such a wonderful rest remaining for us, why don't we think about it more? Has the eternal God provided us such a hope, and promised to take us up to dwell with Himself; and is it not worth thinking about? Do we believe this, and yet forget it and neglect it? Why does God condemn earthly-mindedness and command, "Set your affection on things above"? (Col. 3:2). If God says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15), why then do we make earth our principal concern? Where is the Christian whose concentration is really on his rest? What is the matter—are we so full of joy that we need no more?

I urge you, reader, to bend your soul to study eternity. Busy it about the life to come. Make such meditation your habit. Bathe your soul in heaven's delights; and if your backward soul begins to drag its feet and your thoughts wander, call them back. Hold them to their work. Don't put up with their laziness. When you have, in obedience to God, tried this work, and kept a guard on your thoughts until they are accustomed to obey; then you will find yourself in the suburbs of heaven. Then the life of Christianity will be a life of joy.

The Value of a Heart Set Upon Heaven.

This is the way to live abundantly. It will be the best preventive against temptations. It will be your best comfort in troubles. It will make you most helpful to others. It will honor God.

A heart set upon heaven is *an evidence of your sincerity*. If you ask, "How can I know that I am truly sanctified?" this will provide a sure sign from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself—"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). God is the saints' treasure and happiness; heaven is the place where they must fully enjoy Him. A heart therefore set upon heaven, is a heart set upon God. That is good evidence of saving grace. Such a Christian considers it a day of imprisonment in a windowless dungeon when he has not had one refreshing view of eternity. Christians, if you would like a proof of your title to glory, keep your thoughts on heaven. If sin and Satan cannot keep your affections out of heaven, neither will they be able to keep you yourself out.

The noblest of Christians are they whose faces are set most directly for heaven. The heavenly mind is the best way to a life of comfort. The countries far north are cold and frozen because they are distant from the sun. What makes such frozen, uncomfortable Christians, but their living so far from heaven? And what makes others so warm, but their living higher, and having nearer access to God? When the sun in the spring draws nearer to our part of the earth, how do all things congratulate its approach? The earth looks green, the trees shoot forth, the plants revive, the birds sing, and all things smile upon us. If we would but try this life with God, and keep these hearts above, what a spring of joy would be within us; how we would forget our winter sorrows; and how we would praise our great Creator. O Christian, get above. Those who have been there have found it warmer!

Whom should we blame if we lack such joy, but our own negligent hearts? God has provided us with a crown of glory, and promised to set it soon upon our heads, but we will not so much as think about it. He invites us to behold and rejoice, but we will not so much as *look* at it. And yet we complain for lack of joy. It is by believing that we are "filled with joy and peace," and no longer than we *continue* believing.

As you would delight a covetous man by showing him gold, so God delights His people by leading them into heaven, and showing them Himself and their rest with Him. I urge you, reader, in the name of the Lord, and as you *value the life of steady joy*, to enter upon this work seriously, and learn the art of heavenly-mindedness.

A heart in heaven will be an *excellent defense against temptations to sin*. A heart in heaven can reply to the tempter, as Nehemiah did, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down" (Neh. 6:3). A Christian, when he is taking a survey of his eternal rest, will not listen to the alluring charms of Satan. One with a heavenly mind is the freest from sin, because he has a clearer interest in spiritual things and deeper insight into the evil of sin. Therefore temptations have little power over him. "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird," says Proverbs 1:17, and usually in vain does Satan lay his traps to catch the soul that plainly sees them. Earth is the place for his tempting bait, but how will these trap the Christian who has left the earth and walks with God? If conversation with wise men is the way to make one wise, how much more is conversation with God. If travelers return home with wisdom and experience, how much more he who travels to heaven!

A heavenly mind is also fortified against temptations, because *love is increased*. He who LOVES most, and not he who only KNOWS most, will most easily resist the allurements of sin. When you have had a fresh, delightful taste of heaven, you will not easily be led away from it. You cannot persuade a child to part with his candy while the taste is in his mouth. O that you would be frequently tasting the delights of heaven. How this would strengthen your faith and make you despise the foolishness of the world. If the devil had tried to trap Peter in the mount of transfiguration, when he saw Moses and Elijah talking with Christ, would Peter have so easily been tempted to deny his Lord? With all that glory in his eye? Never! So if Satan should attempt to snare a believing soul when he is on the mountaintop with Christ, such a soul would say, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mark 8:33). If we could keep the taste of our souls continually delighted with the sweetness above, with what disdain would we spit out the baits of sin.

The heavenly Christian is the lively Christian. It is our strangeness to heaven that makes us so dull. When we frequently think of our everlasting treasure we are powerfully motivated in our Christian service. On the other hand, we run so slowly, and work so lazily, because we so lightly consider the prize. Observe the man who is much in heaven, and you will see that he is not like other Christians. Something of what he has seen above appears in all he does. If a preacher, how heavenly are his sermons. If a layman, how heavenly his prayers and behavior. Give yourself to this work and others will notice that you have been "with God on the mount" (Exodus 34:29). But if you complain of deadness and dullness—that you cannot love Christ as much as you should, nor rejoice in His love as you wish you could—then know that you are the cause of your own complaints. If you would have light and heat, why don't you spend more time in the sunshine? Where must you go but to heaven where Christ is?

Some people are motivated by books, others from the mouth of an inspiring preacher, and some by the spurs of trouble. But he who knows the way to heaven, derives from *such meditation a continual refreshing* from the divine fountain. Don't ask, "How can mortals ascend to heaven?" Faith has wings, and meditation is its propulsion. Set your soul conscientiously to this work, wash frequently in this Jordan, and your leprous, dead soul, will revive (2 Kings 5). You will find out that God can give you a vigorous and joyful life.

Frequent views of glory *provide comfort in affliction*. If the way be ever so rough, can it be boring if it leads to heaven? Our tastes of heaven keep the suffering from the soul, so that it can only touch the flesh. Had it not been for that little—unfortunately, too little—taste which I had of heaven, my sufferings would have been too much for me. I may say, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. 27:13). Again, with the Psalmist, I could say, that unless this promised rest "had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction" (Ps. 119:92).

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion—in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me—therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord" (Ps. 27:4-6).

All sufferings are nothing to us, so far as we have these supporting joys. The reason we are impatient and complaining is that we gaze on some present evil but don't fix our thoughts on what is beyond it. Those who saw Christ on the cross, shook their heads and thought him defeated; but God saw him dying, buried, rising, glorified; and all this at one view. Faith will, in this, imitate God, so far as it has the telescope of a promise to help it. We see God burying us under the snow, but we fail to see the springtime when we shall revive. Could we only see heaven as the end of all God's dealings with us, surely none of His dealings could be grievous.

The Christian who concentrates on heaven is *more useful to other people*, and better company. When a man is in a strange country, how glad he is to meet someone from his own nation. How delightful it is to talk about their own country, their common acquaintances, and of interests back home. With what pleasure did Joseph talk with his brethren, and inquire about his father and his brother Benjamin. Is it not pleasurable also for a Christian to have fellowship with people who have likewise been meditating on their heavenly country, and to inquire about the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ? Such conversation is like perfume. All that are near may be made fragrant by it.

Happy the people who have a heavenly minister. Happy the children that have a heavenly father. Happy the man who has a heavenly wife. For my part, I would rather have the company of a heavenly-minded Christian, than that of the most learned or famous people.

When a Christian can live above, and rejoice in the things that are not seen, God is honored by such faith. The Lord will testify of him, "This man believes Me, and takes

Me at my Word. He rejoices in My promise before he has the possession. He can be thankful for what his physical eyes never saw. His heart is with Me; he loves My presence, and he shall surely enjoy it in My kingdom forever!" "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

The person who does not set his affection on things above, disobeys God and loses the most delightful discoveries of the Word of God. The same God who commanded you to believe, and to be a Christian, also commanded you to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1), and to "set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). The same God who has forbidden you to murder, steal, or commit adultery, has forbidden you to neglect this great duty; and do you dare disobey Him?

The descriptions of heaven, the discoveries of our future blessedness, and the precious promises of our rest, are the stars in Scripture's sky. They are the golden lines in the Book of God. Do you neglect and overlook so many of them? Why should God reveal so much and tell us beforehand of the joys we shall possess, except to give us present joy? It has pleased our Father to let us know the very intent of His heart, that our joy might be full (John 15:11), and that we might live as the heirs of such a kingdom.

It is only fair that our hearts should be on God, when the heart of God is so much on us. If the Lord of glory can stoop so low as to set His heart on sinful dust, I think we should easily be persuaded to set our hearts on Christ and heaven, and ascend to Him in our daily meditations. When God speaks of our forgetfulness toward Him, He says, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer. 2:32). When you get up in the morning, you never go off forgetting to dress. Yet you can forget God and your eternal life, day after day. Is dressing more important? Let us get our souls up to God, and visit Him every morning, and let our thinking be directed toward Him every moment.

We call God "our Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). Shall we be as children who are so absorbed in their play that they forget about their father? Friends and old acquaintances are in heaven. We delighted in their fellowship when they were on earth, and we grieved over their departure. If we could go to visit them on earth, we would do so. Why not rejoice now to think of meeting them in heaven? A believer should look to heaven, and contemplate the blessed state of the saints, and think with himself, "Though I am not yet so happy as to be with you, yet this is my daily comfort—you are my fellow-members in Christ, and therefore your joys are my joys. I rejoice in spirit with you, and congratulate your happiness in my daily meditations."

If you were deported to a foreign land, how frequently would your thoughts be at home? Why is it not like that in respect to heaven? Is that not more truly our home, where we will take up our everlasting abode?

Nothing below heaven is worth setting our hearts upon. Have you found eternal happiness on earth? Where is it? What is it made of? If Satan should take you up to the mountain of temptation, and show you "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" (Matt. 4:8), he could show you nothing that is better than your eternal rest. It is true that so far as duty and necessity require it, we must give some attention to earthly matters; but why limit ourselves to these confined quarters?

Now, reader, consider. Have I proved it to be your duty to keep your heart on things above, or have I not? If you acknowledge yourself convinced of the duty, then you condemn yourself if you willfully neglect such a confessed obligation; but if you be sincerely willing, the work is more than half done.

In the following chapters I have some plain directions to give you to help you in this great work; but there is no point in mentioning them unless you are willing to put them into practice. Nevertheless, I will propose them to you, and may the Lord persuade you to use them.

Hindrances to a Heavenly Life on Earth

If you value a heavenly life upon earth, I must charge you to avoid some dangerous hindrances.

LIVING IN ANY KNOWN SIN is a great impediment to a heavenly life. If this be your situation, I dare say that heaven and your soul are strangers. These beams in your eye (Matthew 7:4) will not let you look to heaven. They will be a cloud between you and God. When you attempt to study eternity and gather refreshment from the life to come, your sin will look you in the face and say, "These things do not belong to you." How can you take comfort from heaven when you take so much pleasure in the lusts of the flesh? Every intentional sin will be to your happiness as water to the fire. It will quench your joy. It will disable you, so that you can no more ascend in divine meditation than a bird can fly with clipped wings. We surely need to pray daily, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13).

AN EARTHLY MIND is another hindrance to be avoided. When the heavenly believer is rejoicing in hope of the glory to come, perhaps you are blessing yourself with thoughts of worldly prosperity. You are rejoicing in hopes of earthly success. When he is comforting his soul with the views of Christ, of angels and saints, with whom he shall live forever; you are comforting yourself with your money, and in thinking of the advancement of your family. Your earthly mind may coexist with church membership and formal religious activities, but it cannot coexist with heavenly contemplation. Keep worldly matters as loose as a light jacket, that you may take it off whenever you can; but let God and heaven be next to your heart. Ever remember, that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). This is plain speaking, and happy is he who faithfully receives it.

BEWARE OF THE COMPANY OF THE UNGODLY. Of course, I would not dissuade you from necessary dealings with the ungodly, nor from helping them, and certainly not from endeavoring to draw them to God when you have opportunity. It is the unnecessary fellowship with the ungodly from which I would dissuade you. Chiefly to be avoided are the profane, the swearer, the drunkard, and the enemies of godliness. But they are not the only ones who will prove harmful companions to us. Too frequent fellowship with people whose conversation is empty, will also divert our thoughts from heaven. We need all the help we can get in living the heavenly life on earth.

A stone is as fit to rise and fly in the air, as our hearts are by nature to move towards heaven. You need not *hinder* the rocks from flying up to the sky. It is sufficient that you do not *help* them. Just as surely, if our spirits have not great assistance, they may easily be kept from soaring upwards even without great hindrances. Consider this in the choice of your company. What help will it be to your spiritual life to hear about the weather or the latest news? This is the conversation of earthlings. How will it help to raise your heart to God, to hear about an excellent book, or an able minister, or of some petty controversy? This is mainly the best conversation you are likely to hear from the formal, dead-hearted church member. Can you have your hearts in heaven while among your roaring companions in a bar, or when you work

with those whose common language is profanity, filthiness, foolishness, and dirty jokes? No, the plain fact is, fellowship will be a part of our happiness in heaven; and it is now either a help or hindrance in living a heavenly life on earth.

AVOID FREQUENT DISPUTES ABOUT LESSER TRUTHS, and religion that lies only in opinions. He whose religion is all in his opinions, will be most frequently and enthusiastically mouthing them; but he whose religion lies in the knowledge and love of God, will be most delightfully speaking of that happy time when he shall enjoy them. The least controversial points are usually the most important and most necessary for our souls. "Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive" (2 Tim. 2:23-24). "Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (Titus 3:9).

TAKE HEED OF A PROUD AND LOFTY SPIRIT. If such a spirit cast the angels out of heaven, it must keep your heart from heaven. Communion with God will keep people humble, and that humility will also promote their communion. When a man is absorbed in the study of God's glorious characteristics, he scorns himself. That self-humiliation is his best preparation for obtaining admittance to God again. Therefore, after a soul-humbling day, or in times of trouble when the soul is lowest, it has freest access to God. "God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

Are you delighted when you hear of your popularity, and depressed when you hear that others criticize you? Do you love those best that honor you? Is your anger kindled if your will is crossed? Can you serve God in a low place as well as a high? Are you unacquainted with the deceitfulness and wickedness of your heart? Are you more ready to defend yourself than accuse yourself and confess your fault? Can you scarcely take criticism? If these symptoms persist in your life, you are a proud person. There is too much of hell abiding in you to have any acquaintance with heaven. Your soul is too much like the devil to have any close fellowship with God. A proud man makes himself his god, and sets up himself as his idol. I am saying so much about this, because it is such a common and dangerous sin.

O Christian, if you would live continually in the presence of your Lord, get down on your knees in humility. Learn of Him to be meek and lowly, and you will "find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29). As he that humbles himself as a little child shall hereafter be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, so shall he now be greatest in the foretastes of that kingdom. Therefore, "humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10).

A LAZY SPIRIT is another impediment to this heavenly life. Reader, heaven is *above* you. Do you do you think can climb this steep ascent without effort and determination? Can you get that earthly heart to heaven, and bring that backward mind to God, while you take it easy? Lying down at the foot of the hill, and looking towards the top and wishing you were there, won't do it. You talk, and trifle, and live at your ease, and say, "O that I could get my heart to heaven!" How many people read books and hear sermons, expecting to hear of some easier way. They ask for directions to a heavenly life; and if hearing will be sufficient, they will be heavenly Christians. But if we show them their work, and tell them they cannot have these delights on easier terms, then they leave us, as the young man left Christ, sorrowful (Matthew 19:22).

It was the custom of the ancient Parthians not to give their children any breakfast until they saw the sweat on their faces from some work. You shall find this to be God's usual way, not to give His children the tastes of His delicacies until they begin to perspire in seeking them.

A subtle hindrance to the heavenly life is CONTENTMENT WITH THE MERE PREPARATION for it. When we are satisfied with merely studying of heavenly things, or of talking with one another about them, we miss the life itself. None are more in danger of this trap than those who are employed in leading the devotions of others, especially preachers of the Gospel. O, how easily may such be deceived! While they read and study of heaven, preach and pray and talk of heaven—is this not the heavenly life? Unfortunately, all this is only *preparation*. This is only collecting the materials, not erecting the building itself, let alone dwelling in it. As he that sits at home may draw exact maps of countries, and yet never see them nor travel towards them, so may you describe to others the joys of heaven, and yet never come near it yourself. This temptation is so subtle because studying and preaching about heaven does resemble a heavenly life more than does thinking and talking about the world. This is apt to deceive us. This is to die for thirst while we draw water for others.

How to Seek the Saints' Rest While on Earth

Be convinced of the value of heaven, for if you do not believe it to be the greatest treasure, you will never set your heart upon it. This conviction must sink into your heart, for if it is only an intellectual opinion it will have little motivational power.

Endeavor to remember how near your rest is. We are more aware of that which we think is near at hand than that which we behold at a distance. People give little regard to heaven, because they think of it at too great a distance; they look on it as twenty, thirty, or forty years off. If you really believed you would die tomorrow, how seriously you would think of heaven tonight!

Let your eternal rest be the subject of your conversation, especially with those that can speak from their hearts about the same subject. It is a pity that Christians should ever meet together without some talk of their meeting in heaven, or of the way to it, before they part. It is a pity so much time is spent in petty conversation and useless disputes. O, that we were skillful and determined to turn the stream of conversation to these more sublime and precious matters. When people begin to talk of trifles, we could put in a word for heaven. We would say, as the psalmist, "Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Ps. 137:6).

Let your spiritual experiences increase your interest in heaven. When you kneel down in prayer, do it with the hope of getting your heart nearer to God before you rise up. When you open the Bible, or other book, hope to meet with some passage of divine truth that with the Spirit's blessing will give you a fuller taste of heaven. When you are going to church, say, "I hope to hear something from God that will lift my vision. I hope Christ will appear to me, and shine about me with light from heaven (Acts 26:13-19). Let me hear His refreshing voice, and cause the scales to fall from my eyes (Acts 9:18), that I may see more of that glory than I have yet seen. I hope, that before I return home from church, my Lord will bring my heart within view of that everlasting rest, that I may return as 'the shepherds' from the heavenly vision, 'glorifying and praising God for all the things' I have 'heard and seen'" (Luke 2:20). Remember, therefore, always to pray for your minister, that God would put some divine message into his mouth which may leave a heavenly relish upon your spirit.

Make every object and every event remind your soul of its approaching rest. If we would do this we might have a fuller taste of Christ and heaven in every common meal than most men have in the Holy Communion. If you prosper in the world, let it make you more aware of your eternal prosperity. If you are tired from work, let it make the thought of your eternal rest more desirable. If things go wrong, let your eagerness be increased to have your sorrows and sufferings forever cease. Is your body refreshed with food or sleep? Then remember the coming refreshment with Christ. Do you hear any good news? Then remember what good news it will be to hear the trumpet of God at the Second Coming. Are you delighted with the fellowship of the saints? Then remember what the perfect fellowship in heaven will be. Do you hear of war? Then remember the day when you shall be in perfect peace, under the

reign of the Prince of Peace forever. Thus you see how every condition can afford us an opportunity for heavenly contemplation, if we put our mind to it.

Be much in the angelic work of praise. Praising God is the activity of angels and saints in heaven. It will be our own everlasting work; and if we were now doing it more, we would be more like what we shall be then. Here is the most vivid symbol of heaven that I know upon earth. It is when the people of God with a deep sense of His majesty and mercy, join together, both in heart and voice, to sing His praises from hearts abounding with love and joy.

Reader, I urge you to let praises have a larger part of your activities. Whoever offers praise, glorifies God. "Praise the Lord—for the Lord is good—sing praises unto his name—for it is pleasant" (Ps. 135:3). O, the sinful foolishness of many of the saints, who drench their spirits in continual depression. Instead of joining with the people of God in His praises, they are wallowing in their unworthiness and concentrating on their miseries. So they rob God of His glory and themselves of their joy.

Keep your soul filled with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God. When our ignorance and unbelief have drawn the most deformed picture of God in our imaginations, then we complain that we cannot love Him, nor delight in Him. This is the case of many thousands of Christians. Scripture assures us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8); that He has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. 33:11). O, that we could always think of God as we do of a friend; as of one who loves us, even more than we do ourselves; whose very heart is set upon us to do us good, and has therefore provided for us an everlasting dwelling with Himself. It would not be so hard then to have our hearts ever with Him.

Cherish the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God must be to you what the chariot was to Elijah—the very living principle by which you must move and ascend. Don't grieve your Guide, and don't knock off your chariot wheel! What supernatural help the soul will find in its approaches to the Almighty, if constantly obeying the Spirit. Christian reader, do you not feel sometimes a strong urge to retire from the world and draw near to God? Do not disobey that prompting, but accept the offer. Hoist up the sails while this blessed Wind is blowing. The more you obey, the faster you will go.

I advise you, as a further help to this heavenly life, that you **do not neglect the due care of your physical health.** Your body is a useful servant if you give it its due, and no more than its due. But it is a most devouring tyrant, if you allow it to have everything it wants. On the other hand, it is like a blunt tool, if you unfairly deny what is necessary for its support. As he who wrecks the house wrongs its inhabitants, so they who hurt their bodies, wrong their souls also. When our body is sickly, and our spirits sluggish; how lifelessly do we drag ourselves along the pathway to heavenly meditation.

Directions for Heavenly Contemplation

Meditation is the means by which the soul digests truth for its nourishment and strength. It was God's command to Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein" (Josh. 1:8). As digestion turns food into health, so meditation turns Bible-*believing* into Bible-*living*. It turns the truths received and remembered by the mind into strong will power, genuine emotions, and holy living.

Supposing you to be a Christian, having title to the everlasting rest, I now urge you to be an *active* Christian. It is work for the soul that I am prescribing. God has created the soul with a capacity to appreciate heaven. What better had we been for fragrant flowers, if we had no sense of smell? What benefit would music have been to us, if we could not hear? What pleasure would we have found in food and drink, without the sense of taste? So what good would all the glory of heaven have done us, if we had been without the capacity for love and joy?

It is a mistake of Christians to think that meditation is only the work of the *mind*. Any student can use his mind to think about subjects which he hates. This is not the way we meditate on heaven. There is more to be done, you see, than merely to *think* of heaven. Just as some exercises exert the whole body, so does meditation involve the whole soul. David describes the blessed man like this—"His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law does he meditate day and night" (Ps. 1:2).

This meditation should be both spontaneous and scheduled. Just as there are scheduled times for prayer and other times when we offer up flash prayers wherever we may be; so there is scheduled and spontaneous meditation. When scheduled, we apply ourselves completely to that work. When spontaneous, we enjoy thoughts of God and heaven while in the midst of other duties. Though I want to encourage you to practice that meditation which is mixed with your common daily duties; I would also persuade you to make it a regular, scheduled part of your day. Don't mix other matters with it, at such times, anymore than you would in prayer.

Remember, this meditation is upon your everlasting rest. That which will make us most happy when we possess it, will make us joyful when we meditate upon it. This is a walk to mount Zion—from the kingdoms of this world to the kingdom of saints; from earth to heaven; from time to eternity. Do not think, like worldlings, that such meditation will make you mentally unbalanced. Will it make the prisoner mentally ill to think of deliverance, or the sufferer to foresee healing, or the poor to think of approaching prosperity? Of course not! I think it would more likely make a person frustrated and mentally ill to live in a world of wickedness without hope of any relief. Knowledge has no enemy but ignorance. This heavenly course was never spoken against by any but those that never knew it, or never used it.

Now, as to the BEST TIME for this heavenly contemplation, let me advise that it be scheduled, frequent, and seasonable.

Give it a scheduled TIME. This will defend it against many temptations to skip it. Some people do not have control of their own time, and therefore cannot set their hours. Some are so poor, that the necessities of their families deny them this freedom. Such people should watch for opportunities, and especially meditate and pray as much as they can while they work. Those who have more time to spare from their worldly occupations, and who set their own working hours, should schedule a definite time for meditation.

Let it be frequent as well as scheduled. How often it should be I cannot say, because people's circumstances differ. In general, Scripture requires it to be frequent, when it mentions meditation day and night. For those, therefore, who can omit other business, I advise that it be at least once a day.

Frequency in heavenly contemplation is particularly important to prevent shyness between your soul and God. Frequent fellowship breeds friendship, and friendship increases love and delight. It gives us confidence with a person. The chief purpose of meditation is to have fellowship and friendship with God. Therefore, if you come but seldom to it, you will remain a stranger. When a man feels his need of God, and must seek His help in a time of trouble, then it is great encouragement to go to a God with whom we are acquainted. The heavenly Christian says, "I know Him. I have gone this way many a time before. It is the same God that I daily talk to. We know each other." How different it is when a person is forced to seek God in desperation, and thinks, "I'm not familiar with the court of heaven, and I hardly know the God to whom I must speak."

Especially when we come to die, and must immediately appear before God, and expect to enter into His eternal rest, then the difference is most significant. What a joy it will be to think, "I am going to the place that I daily visited; to the place where I tasted frequent delights; to that God whom I have met in my meditation so often." On the other hand, what a terror will it be to think, "I must die and leave a place where I am acquainted, to go to a place that is strange to me." I am convinced that it is the neglect of this duty which so commonly makes death, even to godly people, unwelcome and uncomfortable. Therefore, I urge you to make your meditation frequent.

How clumsy are people in doing that in which they have had little practice. Frequency will familiarize you with the work, and make it easier and more delightful. The hill which made you pant and puff the first time you climbed it, you may easily run up when you become accustomed to it.

If in holy meditation you get near to Christ and warm your heart with the fire of love, but then come rarely to it, your former coldness will return. Especially is this true because the work is so spiritual and goes against depraved human nature.

Choose also the most seasonable time. All things have their season. The same hour may be seasonable to one and unseasonable to another. Laborers must use that time which their work permits. Some may have to do it while traveling or at night. Those who can choose whatever time of day they wish, should observe when they find their spirits most active and fit for contemplation. They should then decide upon that time as most suitable for their scheduled meditation. I have always found that the best time for myself is early evening, from sunset to twilight. I mention this, because it

was the experience of a better and wiser man; for it is expressly said, "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide" (Gen. 24:63).

The Lord's day is an especially seasonable time for heavenly contemplation. What better time to converse with the Lord than on the Lord's day? What more appropriate day to ascend to heaven than that on which He arose from death? The best attitude for a true Christian is, like John, to be "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10). Christians, let your Sundays be steps to heaven, until you have passed them all and have arrived there. Especially those of you who cannot take time during the week when you wish, see that you make good use of the Lord's day.

Besides considering the best time of each day for heavenly contemplation, and the best day of each week; consider the *special seasons*. For instance, when God has warmed your spirit with fire from above, then you may soar with greater freedom. Observe the gales of the Spirit, and how the Spirit of Christ moves your spirit. When the Spirit finds your heart, like Peter, in prison, and says, "Arise up quickly...and follow me" (Acts 12:7, 8), be sure you then arise and follow; and you will find your chains fall off, and all doors will open, and you will be at heaven before you know it!

Another special season for this duty is when you are suffering, distressed, or tempted. When is it more appropriate to walk in heaven than when we have nothing but grief below? Paul said, "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). "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen—for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Another season particularly fit for this work is when we are about to die. When should we more frequently sweeten our souls with the believing thoughts of another life, than when we find that this one is almost over? How near to heaven was John in Patmos, a short time before his departure to glory (Revelation 1:9). If it be your case, reader, to be aware of your death drawing near, O, where should your heart now be but with Christ? I do you think should behold Him standing by you, and should speak to Him as your husband, physician, friend. I think you should see the angels about you, waiting to perform their last service to your soul, ready to escort you to heaven. Say, as Simeon, "Lord, now let you your servant depart in peace, according to your word—for my eyes have seen your salvation" (Luke 2:29-30).

As for the most suitable PLACE for heavenly contemplation, it is sufficient to suggest a private place. Our spirits need all the help they can get to be free from hindrances. If, in private prayer, Christ directs us to "enter into our closet and shut the door" (Matt. 6:6), so should we do in meditation. How often did Christ Himself retire to some mountain or wilderness, or other solitary place. I do not give this advice for spontaneous meditation, but for that which is scheduled. Therefore withdraw from the fellowship, even of godly men, that you may enjoy the fellowship of your Lord alone. If a student cannot study well in a crowd, when he is only exercising his mind, much less can you meditate in a crowd, when you need to use all the powers of your soul upon an object far above nature. We seldom read of God's appearing, by Himself or

by His angels, to any of His prophets or saints *in a crowd*. Usually it was when they were alone.

Observe for yourself what place is best for you personally, whether inside or outdoors. Isaac's example, in going out to meditate in the field, may suit some (Genesis 24:63). Our Lord so often used a private garden, that Judas, when he came to betray Him, knew where to find Him. Though Jesus took His disciples with Him to the garden, yet "he was withdrawn from them" (Luke 22:41) for more private devotions. Though it is only specified that He prayed, the meditation is implied in that His soul was first made sorrowful from bitter meditations on His coming sufferings and death. Then He poured out His soul in prayer. Christ had His accustomed place, and so must we. However, there is a decisive difference. Christ meditated on the sufferings that our sins had deserved; but we are to meditate on the glory He purchased for us with those sufferings.

Finally, I want to advise you concerning *the preparation of your heart for this heavenly contemplation*. Get as free from the world as you can. Heaven is ready for you, but your heart is unready for heaven. Say to all your worldly business and thoughts, as Christ said to His disciples, "Sit here, while I go and pray yonder" (Matt. 26:36). Be sure to enter this work with reverence. There should be no trifling in holy things. Endeavor to have the deepest awareness of the presence of God and His greatness. With what serious humility should you approach Him who made the worlds and keeps the sun, moon, and stars in their courses. You are going to talk with Him before whom the earth will quake and at whose bar of justice you and all the world must soon stand and be finally judged. If you were pleading for your life in the court of an earthly judge, you would be serious, and yet that would be a trifle compared to this. Consider what awe you should have in daily communication with God.

None on earth live such a life of joy and blessedness as those who are acquainted with this heavenly meditation. The joys of all other people are, by comparison, like a child's toy, or a sick man's dream of health. How seriously, therefore, should this work be done.

Four Aids to Heavenly Meditation

Having set your heart in tune, we now come to the music itself. Having acquired an appetite, approach the feast. Come, for all things are now ready. Heaven and Christ and the eternal glory are before you.

Four factors promote heavenly contemplation. The first factor is **consideration**. By this I mean the reading over and repeating of God's reasonings until His way of thinking becomes our way. We might call this "reflection" or "deliberation." It is to hold a thought in our mind and cherish it. It includes visualizing it, although it is not limited to the sense of sight. This process opens the door between the head and the heart. The intellect having received truths, stores them in the memory; and "consideration" of them sends them into the affections, or emotions and will. If the obstructions between the conscious and subconscious levels of our personality were opened, and our feelings corresponded to our understanding, how helpful education would be.

He is usually the best scholar whose intellectual grasp is quick, clear, and retentive; but he is usually the best Christian whose grasp is most "affectionate." That is, his knowledge of truth sinks down into his emotions and will, and ceases to be merely "head" knowledge, but becomes a sincere "heart" knowledge as well. He not only *thinks* it, but *feels* it and *wills* it. He is the best Christian who has the most open passage, not so much from the ear to the brain, as from ear to heart. The Holy Spirit opens this passage when we consider God's truths by reflecting upon them and by letting them melt through our personality like a lozenger in our mouth.

Such deliberation presents to our view those things which were absent, and brings them to the eye and ear of the soul. Are not Christ and heaven moving thoughts? Would they not work wonders upon the soul, if they were not merely "thoughts," but were clearly seen? It is in the considering of them that the Christian's perspective changes from earth to heaven.

"Consideration" delivers our reason from its captivity to the physical senses. When reason is asleep, the senses dominate. But thinking about God's truth awakens our reason. What strength can the lion exert while asleep? Spiritual reason stirred by consideration exalts the objects of faith. Wicked men continue to be wicked because they do not *think* about the consequences of their actions. Their reason remains asleep. So also godly men can let their reason and faith lie asleep, and fail to stir them to action. What fears and sorrows will our dreams excite. How much more, then, would serious meditation affect us. What we visualize in a dream stirs our emotions powerfully. So also, what we visualize and hold in our minds for vivid consideration, thoroughly rouses our whole personality. Meditation holds reason and faith to their work, and blows the fire until it brightly burns. An occasional thought of heaven will not produce such spiritual heat, but thoughtful reflection can continue our consideration of heaven until our hearts grow warm. Thus you can understand why this factor of "consideration" is a powerful aid to the soul in heavenly meditation.

Secondly, **our attitudes aid us in meditation**. We begin by considering the heavenly truths which we intend to make the subjects of our meditation; such as promises of eternal life, descriptions of the saints' glory, and the resurrections. Next

we present them to **faith's** view. If we really believed that there is such a glory and that within a few days we would see it, O, what intense emotions that would raise within us. What love and longing would it excite within us! O, how it would activate our attitudes as we contemplated both the truth of the promises and our own personal interest in them and title to them. Don't expect love and joy to be aroused when faith stands still. Faith must lead the way. When faith leads, then certain attitudes are excited. Some of them are the following.

LOVE is the first attitude to be stimulated in heavenly contemplation. Let your love be kindled by showing your heart the Son of the living God. Draw near and behold Him. He that invited Thomas to come near and see the print of the nails, and put his finger into His wounds—He it is that calls to you (John 20:27). Look well upon Him. Do you not know Him? It is He that rescued you from hell, reversed the sentence of your damnation, bore the punishment which you should have borne, restored you to the blessing you had lost, and purchased the glory which you will inherit forever.

Is there not fuel enough in this for your love to feed on? The field of love is large; it will be your eternal work to behold and love. Reader, hold forth the goodness of Christ to your heart. Plead with your frozen soul, until, with David, you may say, "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned" (Ps. 39:3). Deal with your heart as Christ did with Peter, when he three times asked him, "Do you love me?" until Peter was grieved, and answered, "Lord, you know that I love you" (John 21:17). So grieve and shame your heart out of its stupidity, until you can truly say, "I know, and my Lord knows, that I love Him."

The next attitude to be excited in heavenly contemplation, is DESIRE. Think about heaven—"O blessed souls that now enjoy it, who see a thousand times more clearly what I have seen at a distance. What a difference between my state and theirs. I am sighing, and they are singing; I am offending, and they are pleasing God. I am here entangled in the love of the world, while they are wrapped up in the love of God. They have none of my cares and tears. I must dwell in sinful flesh, when my brethren and friends dwell with God. What poor, feeble thoughts have I of God—what cold affections towards Him. How little have I of that life, that love, that joy in which they continually live. Here we are irritating each other with quarrels, when they are of one heart and voice, and daily sound forth the hallelujahs of heaven with perfect harmony. O what a feast my faith beholds, and yet what a famine is in my spirit. O blessed souls, I am not jealous of your happiness. I rejoice in your prosperity, and only want to be so happy as to be with you. My Lord is gone; He has left this earth, and is entered into His glory. My relatives are gone. My friends are there—my home, my hope, my all is there." Thus, Christian reader, let your thoughts increase your desire, until your soul longs, as David, "I have longed for your salvation, O Lord" (Ps. 119:174).

Another attitude to be exercised in heavenly contemplation, is HOPE. This helps to support the soul under sufferings, enlivens it in service, and is the very spring that makes all the wheels move. If your hope dies, your perseverance dies, your joy dies, and your soul dies. And if your hope is not exercised, but asleep, it is next to dead. Therefore, when you are thinking about heaven, don't forget to give a lift to your hope.

Think like this—"Would I not hope if an honest man had promised me something within his power to give me? And shall I not hope, when I have the contract and oath of God? It is true that the glory is out of sight, but the promise of God is more certain than our sight. 'Hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it' (Rom. 8:24-25). In my greatest sufferings I will say, 'The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord' (Lamen. 3:24-26). If I had to depend on a weak creature, there would be little hope, for how could he raise my body from the dead and lift me above the sun? But what is this to the Almighty Power who created the heavens and the earth out of nothing? Cannot that power which raised Christ from the dead raise me?"

COURAGE, or boldness, is another attitude to be exercised in heavenly contemplation. It leads to determination. Think of it in this way—"In my ascent to heaven, almost everything is against me, but God is for me. Therefore the work will succeed. Do I enter upon this work in my own strength, or rather in the strength of Christ my Lord? And cannot I do 'all things, through him who strengthens me?' (Philippians 4:13). Is anything too hard for God? Should I listen to people who would try to talk me out of this work? What if it were father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or friend? Should I yield to the wishes of mortals, and only harden myself against the Lord? Let them beg me on their knees, I will not stop my journey to notice them. I will close my ears to their cries. Let them flatter or frown, let them wag their tongues or wave their swords at me; I am resolved, in the strength of Christ, to break through these barricades."

The final attitude to be stimulated in heavenly contemplation is JOY. Love, desire, hope, and courage all tend to increase our joy. This is so obviously desirable to everyone by nature that I don't think I need to say much to persuade you to cultivate that which will make your life delightful. Think what a reason for joy there is in having God's reliable promises. True, we don't have the joy of heaven itself yet, but is it nothing to live in daily expectation of entering into the kingdom of God? Is it not a delight to the heir of a fortune to think of what he must soon possess, even if at present he endures some poverty? Is not my assurance of being hereafter glorified a sufficient reason for inexpressible joy? Yes, we have good reason for rejoicing "in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2).

Here then, reader, take your heart once more and carry it into the land of promise. Show it the pleasant hills and fruitful valleys. Show it the clusters of grapes which you have gathered, to convince it that it is a blessed land, flowing with better than milk and honey (Numbers 13:21-24). Enter the gates of the holy city, walk through the streets of the New Jerusalem. Consider her palaces, that you may tell it to your soul. See the walls of the city. "The foundations of the wall of it were of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones" (Rev. 21:18-19). "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, every several gate was of one pearl—and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" (Rev. 21:21-22). "And I saw no temple therein—for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it—for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of those who are

saved shall walk in the light of it" (Rev. 21:22-24). Say now to all this, "This is your rest, O my soul; and this must be the place of your everlasting home."

The soul that loves God ascends frequently, and runs familiarly through the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, visiting the prophets, waving to the apostles, and admiring the martyrs. Lead your heart on from street to street. Bring it to the palace of the great King. Say to your heart, "Here I must live. Here I must praise. Here I must love and be loved. My tears will then be wiped away. My cottage of clay be changed to this palace; my prison rags to these splendid robes; my sordid flesh shall be put off, and a sun-like, spiritual body be put on; 'for the former things are passed away'" (Rev. 21:4). What a day that will be to my soul. When the wise men saw the star that led to Christ, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy" (Matt. 2:10), but I shall see Him who is Himself "the bright and morning Star" (Rev. 22:16). If the disciples "departed quickly from the sepulcher with...great joy" (Matt. 28:8), when they had but heard that their Lord "was risen from the dead" (Matt. 28:7), what will my joy be when I shall see Him reigning in glory, and myself raised to happy fellowship with Him? Why don't I feed on these foreseen delights of glory more? Why isn't my life a continual joy, and the fragrance of heaven perpetually upon my spirit?

Let me here observe that there is no need to exercise these attitudes in exactly this order, or all at one time. Sometimes one of your attitudes may need more stimulation; or, it may be more lively than the rest. If your meditation time is short, one attitude may be stimulated one day, and another the next. You can also exercise opposite attitudes if you wish—such as hatred of sin; godly fear, shame, and grief; sincere repentance; and pity for those who are in danger of losing the everlasting joy.

The third and fourth aids to heavenly meditation are soliloquy and prayer. In a way, meditation can be compared with preaching, in which the mere *explaining* of truth is not as helpful as the lively *application* of truth to the hearers. Soliloquy *applies* the meditation more pointedly to your own soul.

By *SOLILOQUY* I mean a pleading of the case with yourself. You must in your meditation wake up your own heart. Enter into a serious debate with it. Plead with it in the most moving and motivating language. Urge it with the most powerful and persuasive arguments. It is what holy men of God have practiced in all ages. Thus David said, "Why are you cast down, O my soul; and why are you disturbed within me? Hope you in God—for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God" (Ps. 42:11). And again, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits" (Ps. 103:1-2). This soliloquy is to be used according to your need. It is preaching to one's self. Every good Christian is a good preacher to his own soul. Observe the content and delivery of the most effective preachers. Let them be a pattern for your imitation. Use the same methods they use in persuading the hearts of the congregation, in order to persuade your own heart. Do this when meditating.

Explain to yourself the things on which you meditate. Confirm your faith in them by Scripture, and then **apply** them to yourself, according to your needs. Doesn't God command you to teach the Scriptures "diligently unto your children, and talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up"? (Deut. 6:6-7). And if you must have some ability to teach

your children, so you must have some to teach yourself. If you can talk of divine things to others, why not also to your own heart?

Heavenly contemplation is also promoted by speaking to God in *PRAYER*, as well as speaking to ourselves in *soliloquy*. How often do we find David, in the same psalm, sometimes pleading with his soul and sometimes with God. The apostle Paul urges us to speak to ourselves "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19), and no doubt we may also speak to God in them. This keeps the soul aware of the divine presence.

The Hebrew word "to meditate" means also "to pray." Thus, in our meditations, to intermix soliloquy and prayer, sometimes speaking to our own hearts and sometimes to God, is, I believe, the highest step to which we can advance in this heavenly work. It is not sufficient to take up prayer alone and lay aside meditation, for they are distinct duties, and both of them must be performed. We need one as well as the other, and therefore shall wrong ourselves by neglecting either. Besides, the mixture, like the harmony of music, will be more beautiful, because the one serves to put life into the other.

Our speaking to ourselves in meditation should go before our speaking to God in prayer. For lack of attention to this proper order, men speak flippantly to God. They speak with less reverence and affection than they would speak to an angel if he should appear before them, or to a judge if they were speaking for their lives. Speaking to the God of heaven in prayer, is a more momentous mandate than most imagine!

How to Persevere in Heavenly Contemplation

The hardest part of heavenly meditation is bringing it into clear focus. It is easier to think about "heaven" as an abstract idea than to concentrate on the *real* heaven. Faith meets tremendous resistance in trying to view that which is supernatural. It grows tired quickly. The objects of faith are far off, but those of our physical senses are near. It is easier to rejoice in what we see than in what we have never seen. Our faith can be assisted therefore by calling upon our physical senses. Just as an earthly telescope can enable us to see far beyond the earth to glittering galaxies above, so also faith can use some help in meditating upon the things above. Our senses have sometimes been our enemies drawing us toward the sensual rather than the spiritual.

It is good strategy to make our senses allies in drawing us nearer to God. Why has God given us our senses if they might not be useful in His service? Why does the Holy Spirit describe the glory of heaven in terms that are appealing to the flesh? Is it that we might think of heaven to be made of gold and pearl; or that saints and angels eat and drink? No; but to help us to conceive of them as we are able. We use these scriptural pictures to aid our concentration and to make the things of heaven vivid until we come to see them perfectly in heaven itself.

Here are some suggestions for assisting your heavenly meditation with your physical senses.

First, ***think of heaven in as real a way as possible.*** Think of the joys above as boldly *as Scripture expresses them.* When we attempt to think of God and heaven without the Scripture's manner of representing them, we have nothing upon which to fix our thoughts. It is all abstract and vague. Our minds wander into thin air. Love and joy are promoted by familiar acquaintance. Therefore put Christ no further from you than He has put Himself. Think of Christ in terms of our own perfected nature. Think of the redeemed in heaven as people made perfect.

Imagine yourself surveying the New Jerusalem with John. You view the thrones, the heavenly hosts, and the shining splendor of what he saw. Imagine yourself as John's fellow-traveler into the celestial kingdom. See the saints in their white robes, like the Olympic champions of ancient Greece, waving palm branches victoriously. Imagine hearing the music of heaven. If you had really seen and heard these things, how excited you would have been. Don't try to paint the pictures, but just get as vivid, colorful, three-dimensional *mental* images of them as you possibly can. Do this by contemplating the scriptural accounts of them until you can say, "I think I see a glimpse of glory! I think I hear the shouts of joy and praise. I think I can even see the Son of God appearing in the clouds."

I confess that my very dreams of these scenes have sometimes tremendously inspired me. Should not these meditations based on Scripture stir me even more? What if I had seen, with Stephen, "the heavens opened, and the Son of God standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56)? Surely that sight was worth the storm of stones. What if I had seen, as Micaiah did, "the Lord sitting on his throne and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left" (1 Kings 22:19)?

Such sights those men of God saw; and I shall shortly see far more, as they did also when they reached heaven.

Another way in which our senses may aid us in our meditation is by **comparing the objects of sense with the objects of faith**. Think—if it is such a delight for a sinner to do wickedly, how much greater delight will it be to live with God? If the way to hell can afford such pleasure, what must be the pleasures of the saints in heaven? If the covetous man has so much pleasure in his money, and the ambitious man so enjoys his power and fame; then what sheer ecstasy must the saints in heaven experience with their everlasting treasures and heavenly honors.

Compare—How sweet is food to my taste when I am hungry, especially if it be, as Isaac said, "such as I love" (Gen. 27:4). What delight then must my soul have in feeding upon Christ, "the living bread" (John 6:51), and in eating with Him at His table in His kingdom (Luke 22:30). How refreshing is a cool drink when my throat is dry as dust—the satisfaction can scarcely be expressed. O, how delightful will it be to my soul to drink of that fountain of living water, which whoever drinks of it shall thirst no more (Revelation 7:17). What fragrance exudes from "the precious ointment which is poured on the head" of the Anointed One, the Messiah, our glorified Savior, and which must be poured on the head of all his saints. It will fill all heaven with its odor. How delightful is the music of the heavenly host. How pleasing will be those real beauties above. How magnificent the "building of God—not made with hands" (2 Cor. 5:1), the house that God Himself dwells in.

Compare also the delights that go beyond the physical senses even upon this earth. The exhilaration, for example, of working on an invention, can make a person forget about eating or sleeping. Should I not be much more absorbed in the delights of heaven? What exquisite pleasure it is to dive into the secrets of nature and make discoveries in the mysteries of arts and sciences! If human learning be so interesting as to make sensual pleasure seem secondary, how much greater must be the excitement of heaven where we shall know in a moment all that there is to be known.

Consider the sweetness of natural love, whether to children, parents, mates, or intimate friends. If the delights of close friendship be so great, what delight shall we have in the friendship of the Most High, and in our mutual intimacy with Jesus Christ, and in the dearest love of the saints! We shall then love a thousand times more ardently than we can now.

Think how God has blessed you over your life time, and you can exclaim, "If my *pilgrimage* and *warfare* have seen such mercy, what shall I find in my *home* and *victory*? If God helps me so much while I remain a sinner, what will He give when I am a perfected saint? If I have had so much at a distance from Him, what shall I have in His immediate presence?" Think how the Bible has blessed you, and say, "If His *letters* are so comforting, what will the glory of His *presence* be? If the *promise* is so sweet, what will the *performance* be?"

How often we have read and heard of dying saints who have been full of joy; and when their bodies ached with pain, they had so much of heaven in their spirits that their joy far exceeded their sorrows. If a spark of this fire be so glorious even amid the suffering, what then is heaven itself? Think of the joy that the martyrs have felt in the flames. What filled their spirits with such joy while their bodies were burning? It

must have been some fantastic foretaste of glory that made the flames of fire easy. What must the glory itself be!

How often, when I have thought of my conversion, have I cried out, "O happy day! Praise God for redeeming me!" How much more shall I cry out in heaven, "O blessed eternity! Praise God who brought me to it!" Did the angels of God rejoice to see my conversion? Surely they will congratulate my arrival in heaven.

Hasn't God sometimes revealed Himself in a special way to you? Haven't you known times when God let a drop of glory fall upon you! Think to yourself, "What is this 'down payment' compared with the full inheritance? All this light, that so amazes and delights me, is but a candle lighted from heaven to lead me through this world of darkness." Or, if you have not yet felt such sweet previews of glory—for not every believer has felt them—then make use of such peace, love, and joy as you have felt, to look forward to what you will hereafter experience.

Preserve heavenly meditation from a wandering mind. You will find your mind backward and resistant to this work. O, what excuses it will make; what evasions it will find. Either it will question whether it be a duty or not; or if it be so for others, whether it is for you. It will say, "This is a work for ministers who have nothing else to do, or for people who have more time than I." If you are a minister, it will say, "This is the duty of the lay people; it is enough for me to teach them." As if it were your duty only to cook the meal and serve it to them, and they alone must eat it, digest it, and live upon it!

If these tricks don't work, your mind will remind you of other business that needs attention; for the mind would rather do almost anything else but this. Perhaps it will say, "Other duties are more important, and I haven't time to do everything." As if there were any better way to fit us to be useful to others, than by fixing our mind on the goal of life. Certainly heaven is the best fire at which to light our candle, and the best book for a preacher to study.

If your mind has nothing to say against meditating on heaven, it will trifle away the time in delays. Do it tomorrow or the next day. So far as the mind is carnal, it will seek such escapes. But so far as it is spiritual, it will find this to be a most satisfying activity.

What is to be done? Will you do it if I tell you? What if you had an employee who would not work? You would surely take decisive action. Have you no command of your own thoughts? Have you become a slave again to your depraved nature? Resume your authority! Call on the Spirit of Christ to assist you. Say to Him, *Lord, You gave my reason the command of my thoughts and desires. The authority I have received over them is from You. Now, look, they refuse to obey Your authority. You command me to set them to the work of heavenly meditation; but they rebel and stubbornly refuse the duty. Please enable me to exercise that authority which You have given me. O send down Your Spirit, that I may enforce Your commands, and effectually compel them to obey Your will.* Then you will see your mind submit. Its resistance will be overcome, and its backwardness be turned into cheerful compliance.

Your emotions may also betray you. They persuade you that you don't feel like meditating on heaven, and that you should wait until your love of God motivates you to engage in such meditation. That would be like waiting until you feel warm before going into a heated home. Go inside, and then you will feel warm around the roaring fireplace. So also, start contemplating heaven, and the result will be a rising of your emotional temperature. You will then find God's love exciting you to think still more of heaven.

The wandering mind will also turn to other subjects as an escape from disciplined concentration. It will be like a lazy employee who stops his work to visit with anyone who will talk. When there should be nothing in your mind but heaven, it will cheat and peek at lesser things. The cure is alert discipline. Say to your truant mind, "See here! I did not come here to think of worldly business, of people, places, news, or passing events. I came to think of heaven alone. Can you not 'watch one hour?'" (Mark 14:37).

Tell yourself off. Say, "Would you leave this world and dwell forever with Christ in heaven, and yet you will not leave it one hour to dwell with Christ in meditation? Whom are you fooling? Is this the love you have for your Friend? Do you love Christ and your eternal home no more than *this*?"

One more trick the mind may play on you. It will seek to end your meditation before your spirit is really warmed up. Your mind will weary of the work and beg you to stop too soon. But if you stop before the end of your journey, is not your travel wasted? You come to spy out the land of promise. Don't go back without a "cluster of grapes" to show your brethren for their encouragement (Numbers 13:21-24).

The heavenly fire needs time to operate. Given time it will melt your frozen heart and refine it. Pursue the work until your soul is refreshed with the delights above. And if you cannot attain these goals at first, try again until you succeed. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, shall find so doing" (Matt. 24:46).

Heavenly Meditation

Now, reader, according to the directions already given, conscientiously practice meditation as well as prayer. Do it daily if possible. Retire into some private place at the most convenient time, and lay aside all worldly thoughts. With all possible seriousness and reverence look up towards heaven. Remember there is your everlasting rest. Study its excellency and reality. Rise from sense to faith by comparing heavenly with earthly joys. Then mix exclamations with your soliloquies, until, having pleaded the case reverently with God and seriously with your own heart, you have ignited yourself from dust to flame. It will change you from a forgetful sinner and lover of the world, to an ardent lover of God; from a fearful coward to a persistent Christian; from an unfruitful sadness to a joyful life. In other words, this activity will wean your heart from earth to heaven; from crawling in earth's dust to walking with God.

As you meditate on your everlasting rest, here are some suggestions. **Consider the significance of "rest."** How sweet the sound. Rest! Not as the stone that rests on the earth. Not as this flesh shall rest in the grave. But that active rest, when we "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty!" (Rev. 4:8). When we shall rest from sin, but not from worship; from suffering and sorrow, but not from joy. O blessed day, when I shall rest with God. My perfect soul and body shall together perfectly enjoy the most perfect God; when God, who is Love itself, shall perfectly love me.

Consider how *near* that rest is. Though my Lord seems to delay His coming, yet a little while and He will be here. What are a few hundred years when they are over? I think I hear His trumpet sound. I think I see Him coming in the clouds, with His attending angels, in majesty and glory.

Now, blessed saints, that have believed and obeyed, this is the climax of faith and patience. This is it for which you prayed and waited. Are you now sorry for your sufferings and sorrows, your self-sacrifices and holy living? See how the Judge smiles on you; there is love in His looks, the titles of Redeemer, Husband, Head, are written in His friendly, shining face. Listen! He calls you. He invites you to stand on His right hand. Fear not, for that is where He sets His sheep. O happy announcement, "Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). He takes you by the hand, the door is open, the kingdom is His and therefore yours; there is your place before His throne. The Father receives you as the spouse of his Son, and bids you welcome. Ever so unworthy, you must be crowned. This was the purpose of free redeeming grace, the climax of eternal love. O blessed grace; O wonderful love! But I cannot express it. I cannot even imagine it.

This is that joy which was purchased by sorrow, that crown which was bought by the cross. My Lord wept, that now my tears might be wiped away. He bled, that I might now rejoice. He was forsaken, that I might have this fellowship. He then died, that I might now live. O free mercy, that can exalt so unworthy a sinner. Free to me, though costly to Christ!

This is not like our cottages of clay, our prisons, our earthly dwellings. This voice of joy is not like our old complaints, our impatient groans and sighs; nor this

harmonious praise like the curses which we heard on earth. This body is not like what we had, nor this soul like the soul we had, nor this life like the life we lived. Where are the old divisions, arguments, bad names, exasperated tempers, frowns, and uncharitable condemnations? Now we are all of one heart, home, and happiness. O sweet reconciliation! Now the Gospel shall no more be dishonored through our foolishness. No more, my soul, shall you mourn for suffering friends, nor weep over their graves. You shall never suffer your old temptations from Satan, the world, or your own flesh. Your pains and sickness are all cured. Your body shall no more burden you with weakness and weariness. Headaches and hunger, insomnia and exhaustion, all are gone. Blessed change! Farewell sin and sorrow forever. Good-bye my proud, unbelieving heart—my worldly, sensual, carnal mind; and welcome now my most holy, heavenly nature. My face will not wrinkle, nor my hair be gray; for this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" (1 Cor. 15:54-55). The date of my lease will no more expire. When millions of ages are passed, my glory is but beginning; and when millions more are passed, it is no nearer ending.

Ah, drowsy, earthly heart, how coldly do you think of this coming day. Would you rather sit down in dirt than walk in the palace of God? Is it better to be here, than above with God? Is the company better? Are the pleasures greater? Yonder is your Father's glory. Yonder, O my soul, must you go when you depart this body. When the power of your Lord raises your body and joins you to your new immortal body, yonder you will live with God forever. There is the glorious New Jerusalem, the gates of pearl, the foundation of pearl, the streets and sidewalks of transparent gold.

O my soul, do you stagger at the promises of God through unbelief? (Romans 4:20). I highly suspect you. If you really believed, you would be more excited by it. Is it not under the signature and oath of God? Can God lie? Can He that is Truth itself be false? What need does God have to flatter or deceive you? Why should He promise you more than He will perform? Dare not to charge the wise, Almighty, faithful God with this! O wretched heart of unbelief, has God made you a promise of rest, and will you come short of it? Your eyes and ears and all your senses may prove delusions sooner than a promise of God could delude you. You may be more certain of that which is written in the Word, than if you saw it with your own eyes or felt it with your own hands.

As I cannot match the Lord in works of power, no more can I match Him in love. Lord, I surrender. I am completely overcome by your love. Your captive will gladly proclaim your victory. Shall I not love at all, because I cannot reach your immeasurable love? Though I cannot say that I love You as You love me, yet I can say, "Lord, You know that I *want* to love You. I am angry with my heart that it does not love You more."

My Lord has taught me to rejoice in hope of His glory, and even to see it through the present bars of a prison—for, when "persecuted for righteousness' sake," He commands me to "rejoice, and be exceeding glad," because "my reward in heaven is great" (Matt. 5:10-12).

But your feast, my Lord, is nothing to me without an appetite. You have set the delicacies of heaven before me; but unfortunately, I am blind and cannot see them. I

am sick and cannot relish them. I am so paralyzed that I cannot put forth a hand to take them. I therefore, humbly beg this grace, that as you have opened heaven to me in Your Word, so YOU would open my eyes to see it, and my heart to delight in it. O Spirit of life, breathe your grace into me. Take me by the hand, and lift me from the earth, that may see what glory You have prepared for those who love You (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

Can my tongue say that I shall shortly and surely live with God, and yet my heart not leap within me? Can I say it with faith, and not with joy? Ah, faith, how clearly do I now see your weakness. But though unbelief darkens my light, and dulls my life, and suppresses my joys; it shall not be able to conquer and destroy me. Can beautiful objects delight my eyes, or pleasant odors my smell, or melody my ears; and shall not the forethought of celestial bliss delight me? Lord, You have reserved my perfect joy for heaven. Help me to desire until I may possess, and let me long for it when I cannot, as I wish I could, rejoice in it.

Why do I so easily forget my resting place? O my soul, does the dullness of your desire after rest not accuse you of most detestable ingratitude and foolishness? Must your Lord purchase you a rest at so costly a price, and you not value it more? Must He go before to prepare so glorious a mansion for such a wretch, and are you reluctant to go and possess it? Shall the Lord of glory desire your company, and you do not desire His? Must earth become a very hell to you before you are willing to be with God? If your successful efforts and godly friends seem better to you than a life with God, it is time for God to take them from you.

Ah, my dear Lord, though I cannot say, "My soul longs after you" (Psalm 84:2), yet I can say, "I long for such a longing heart." "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:4). My spirit cries, "Let 'your kingdom come' (Matt. 6:10), or let me come to Your kingdom;" but the flesh is afraid you might hear my prayer and take me at my word!

I am willing to stay here on earth while You will use me. Give me the work which You have for my hands. But when it is done, take me at my best. I don't want to be so impatient as to ask You to cut off my time and take me home before I am prepared, for I know my eternal reward depends so much on the use I make of this life. But neither would I stay here when my work is done. While I must be absent from You, let my soul as sincerely groan as my body does when it is sick.

O Savior, hasten the time of Your return. Let that joyful trumpet sound the signal for the great resurrection day, when your command shall go forth, and none disobey. Then the sea and the earth shall yield up their hostages, and all that sleep in the grave shall awaken, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. I can lay down my body in the dust, trusting it not to a grave, but to You, O Lord. Therefore shall my flesh rest in hope, until You raise it to everlasting rest.

O let "your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10). Your homesick bride says, "Come!" for your Spirit within her says, "Come!" and teaches her thus to pray (Revelation 22:17). Yes, the whole creation says, "Come!" And You yourself have said, "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

Concluding Encouragement

I have given you, dear reader, my best advice for maintaining a heavenly life. If you cannot meditate as systematically and completely as I have recommended, then do it as you can. Just be sure to do it seriously and frequently. Become friendly with this heavenly work, and you will, in some degree, become friendly with God. Your joys will be spiritual, stable, and lasting, like the object of their meditation. You will surely find comfort both in life and death. When you have neither wealth nor health nor the pleasures of this world, yet you will have comfort. Without depending upon the presence of any friend, minister, book, or any other help, you will still have vigorous, real comfort. When all means of help are denied you or taken from you, yet your spiritual life will be active and victorious. You will draw your daily joy from heaven.

You will be as one that stands on the peak of a mountain and looks down on the world below. The greatest rulers will seem but as grasshoppers. The busy, arguing, greedy world will seem like an ant hill. Men's threats will be no worry to you, nor the honors of this world any enticement. Temptations will be less dangerous, having lost their strength. Troubles will be less grievous, having lost their sting.

It is now up to you whether you will live this blessed life or not, and whether all this effort I have taken for you will do you any good or be wasted. If it be wasted through your neglect, you yourself will be the greatest loser. What do you have to consider that is better than God and heaven? Are you not almost out of this world already? One disease or another is liable to release your soul. The grave awaits you. What if your pulse must beat a few strokes more? What if you have a little longer to breathe, before you breathe your last; a few more nights to sleep, before you sleep in the grave? Very shortly you will hear your clock strike, and say to yourself, "My life is done; my time is gone; there is nothing now but heaven or hell before me." Where, then, should your heart *now* be, but in heaven? If you only knew what a dreadful thing it is to have doubts about heaven when you are dying, it would shake you. And what else can a person do, but have some trembling doubts, if he never seriously thought of heaven before?

Some say, "It is not worth so much time and trouble to think about the joys above. If we can be sure we are saved, we know heaven will be wonderful; so why spend any time in heavenly meditation?" These people do not obey God's command, which requires them to set their "affections on things above" (Col. 3:2). Our homeland or citizenship "is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ—who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21). Thus these people who ignore their homeland voluntarily make their own lives miserable, by refusing the delights which God has set before them. And if that were not all, it were a small matter—but see how many other problems follow the neglect of these heavenly delights. This neglect will dampen, if not destroy, their love of God. It will make even the thinking or speaking of God unpleasant. It weakens their desire to engage in His service. It tends to pervert their judgment concerning the ways of God. It leaves them in the power of every trouble and temptation. It will also make them afraid and unwilling to die; for who would want to go to a God or a place he has no delight in? Who would leave his pleasure here, if he did not *know* a better place to go?

Had I been proposing a course of sadness and fear, you might have objected. But I have been talking about heavenly delights. God is willing you should daily walk with Him and draw happiness from the everlasting fountain. If you are not willing; then suffer your loss, and when you are dying, try to find your comfort elsewhere. See if physical pleasures will remain with you then. Your conscience will remember, in spite of you, that you were once persuaded to a way for more excellent pleasures—pleasures that would have followed you through death and have lasted eternally.

As for you whose hearts God has weaned from all things here below, I hope you will value this heavenly life, and walk every day in the New Jerusalem. God is your love and your desire. I know it is your grief, that your heart is not even nearer to Him, and that you do not more completely love Him and delight in Him. Try this life of meditation on your heavenly rest, and the world will see by your heavenly life, that religion is something more than opinions and arguments or good deeds.

As Moses, before he died, went up into mount Nebo to take a survey of the land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 34:1), so the Christian ascends the mount of meditation, and by faith surveys his rest. He hears as it were, the melody of the heavenly choir, and says, "Happy is that people that is in such a case—yes, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord" (Ps. 144:15). When he looks upon the Lord himself, he is ready, with the rest of heaven's inhabitants to fall down and "worship him that lives forever and ever" (Rev. 4:10), and say, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come!" (Rev. 4:8). "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power—for you have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). When he looks on the glorified Savior, he is ready to say "Amen" to that "new song" (Rev. 5:9) "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever" (Rev. 5:13). "For you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God kings and priests" (Rev. 5:9-10). When the Christian looks back on the wilderness of this world, he blesses the believing, patient saints, and pities the ignorant, stubborn, miserable world; and for himself he says, as Peter, "It is good for us to be here" (Luke 9:33).

Daniel, in his captivity, daily opened his window toward Jerusalem, when he went to God in his devotions, even though Jerusalem was so distant and far out of sight (Dan. 6:10). So may the believing soul, in this captivity of the flesh, look towards "Jerusalem which is above" (Gal. 4:26).

O merciful Father, draw up these hearts unto yourself, and keep them there until they are purified; and persuade those who read these lines to practice this delightful, heavenly work. O let not the soul of your most unworthy servant be a stranger to those joys which he has described to others; but keep me, while I remain on earth, in daily breathings after You, and in a believing, loving walking with You. And when You come, let me be found so doing—waiting and longing for my Lord's return.

Let those who shall read these heavenly directions, not merely read the fruit of my studies, but the breathing of my active hope and love. Let these words not witness against me; but proceeding from the heart of the writer, through Your grace, let them be effective upon the heart of the reader, and so be a blessing to both. Amen!

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men" (Luke 2:14).

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