

## SERMON XXII.

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ON THE STATE OF GLORY AND BLESSEDNESS,  
WHICH THE SOULS OF GOD'S ELECT, BE-  
LIEVERS IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, ENTER  
IMMEDIATELY UPON, AT THEIR DEPARTURE  
FROM THE BODY, AT DEATH.

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2 CORINTHIANS V. 1.

*“ For we know, that if our earthly house of  
this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building  
of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in  
the heavens.”*

IN our reading the gospel of the blessed  
God, we, so far as favoured with the light and  
inspiration of the Holy Ghost, are in a measure  
enabled to understand the mystery of God, and  
of the Father, and of Christ. Being thus ad-  
mitted into the knowledge of the Holy Ones,  
the Holy Father, the Holy Son, and the Holy  
Spirit, who are Three in One, and One in Three,  
in the incomprehensible Jehovah, we proceed  
with pleasure in our perusal of the revealed  
account given us therein, of the everlasting love

of the essential Three, to the elect of mankind in Christ, with the eternal purposes and designs, will, and covenant, of the ever blessed Trinity towards them, before all worlds, as displayed and made manifest unto them in a time state; and which will be continued to be displayed in them, throughout a boundless eternity.

In the revelation given us in the inspired volume, concerning the acts and transactions of the eternal Three, in the everlasting covenant, we have the gospel, in its original, set before us in the incarnation, obedience, life, and death of Jehovah Jesus; we have it realized and fulfilled: all which is set before us by the Holy Ghost, in the scriptures of truth, who brings home and makes it evident in the souls of God's elect, when they are, by his omnipotent and divine agency, created anew in Christ Jesus. When they are born again, and brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son, then they are, by their new birth, made meet for fellowship with the Father and the Son, by the in-dwelling and gracious influences of the Holy Ghost.

In the sacred draft given us of God's eternal designs and decrees, concerning his elect, in the sacred page, we cannot but see and take notice, that they have been, and are to be conducted through different states, for the illustration and display of the rich, free, and sovereign grace of God, towards them.

They were the objects of the Father's everlasting love; he manifested it by choosing them in Christ, before the foundation of the world; in blessing them with all spiritual blessings, in predestinating them to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made them accepted in the beloved.

Thus the elect were in Christ before the world began; they were brought forth by creation, pure and holy, in Adam their nature head, when he stood the representative of the whole human race. This was their creation state.

They are, by his transgression, in a fallen state, and by their natural birth, and union to, and communion with him, they are dead in trespasses and sins. This is commonly called their state of nature, or their sinful and natural state.

They are redeemed and bought out of this state, by the blood and death of Christ, and are brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, by the energy and grace of the Holy Ghost. This is their regenerate state.

From this state, their next translation is, to the state of glory, where they have a beatific vision of Christ, and are absent from the body, and present with the Lord. This is their glorified state.

When all the elect are effectually called, and brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, and all the ends of his mediation are fully accomplished, in the church militant, then the resurrection will take place, and they will be admitted into the resurrection state; in which their bodies being raised from the grave of death, and their souls reunited to them, they will bear the image of the heavenly Adam. Their bodies will be made "like unto his glorious body." The Lord will be with, and in his people for ever: they will be where he is, see him face to face, be like him, in body and soul, and enjoy him with the fullest and utmost capacity and exercise of every spiritual faculty and sense. This will be blessedness beyond all our present conception. And, after Christ and his saints have dwelt in the new heaven and the new earth together, for a thousand years, the state of ultimate glory will take place, in which God will be all in all, in the person of Christ God-man for ever.

Thus the elect pass out of darkness, death, and condemnation, by regeneration, into a state of spiritual life, light, justification, pardon, acceptance, grace, and liberty. They are removed out of this state, to that of glory and blessedness, by the violence of death: from this, they are conducted into a glorious state, in which their bodies, disunited from their souls, are again reunited, and they shine, in their souls and bo-

dies, like Christ's glorious body ; and when they have had such communion with Christ, in the new Jerusalem state, as will exceed and transcend what is now enjoyed by saints in glory, they will be admitted to the ultimate state of glory, in which Jehovah, in all his persons and perfections, shining on them, in the person of the God-man, will fill them with all the fulness of God.

My design, in the following discourse, by the Lord's blessing, is to lead you to view the state of saints, believers in Christ Jesus, from the moment they depart from their bodies at death, to the morn of the glorious resurrection. As a preliminary to this, it may not be amiss to observe the great and almighty work the Lord works in the souls of his people, by his eternal Spirit, by which they are "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," and the blessed state they are in by regeneration.

Election is the original act of God towards his people, and contains in it, the fundamental of all grace and glory. The work of Christ is the compleat salvation of all the elect of God. Regeneration is the first act of grace, which takes place in them ; and it lays the foundation of all grace and glory in their souls. This is the work of the Holy Ghost : it is an inherent work, and the soul is the subject of it.

In regeneration, the elect sinner is quickened with new, spiritual, and supernatural life ; a new

creation is wrought in the soul: the mind is enlightened, and made alive to God, by faith in Christ Jesus. There are new and spiritual faculties created in the new man, to know, believe, and enjoy God in Christ.

The regenerated person is translated out of the state, and from the power of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son; the renewed person is called into fellowship with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Thus he is manifested to be a child of God, and an heir of glory; he is actually passed from death unto life; he believes on Christ, to the saving of his soul; he hath everlasting life; he is the temple of the living God; a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; the Spirit of God and of glory resteth upon him; the Holy Ghost dwells in him, as the earnest of glory, and gives him, at seasons, real believing views of it, and fills his soul with the real foretastes and joys thereof; which are so many evidences to him of his personal interest in Christ, and of his meetness for heaven. The Lord the Spirit, by these inward spiritual feelings and perceptions, brings the believer in Christ Jesus to desire and long for the full enjoyment of the blessings of immortality and eternal glory.

This is a brief account of the work produced by the almighty energy of the Holy Ghost in regeneration, and what he performs

and produces in the soul born again. As it respects the state into which the regenerate are brought, it is a state of justification unto life, pardon, salvation, and free access to God's throne of grace. The believer's state, before God, is a state of perfect acceptance in the beloved: the God of all grace hath called him into his eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, so that it is but for him to put off the body by death, and thus to drop the body of sin and death, and he is immediately absent from it, and present with the Lord.

The apostle, in the chapter from whence I have read my text, speaks of the expectation, assurance, and desire of heavenly glory, wrought in the minds of saints by the Spirit of the living God. In his own, and in the name of all believers, he says, "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." In which words, in their coherence, and following connection to the fourth verse of this chapter, we have a glorious proof, that the souls of believers do, immediately at death, pass into a state of glory. This truth is here made use of, to comfort the believer against the fear of death. The earnest desires God has implanted in the minds of the regenerate, are a demonstration that such a state is ordained by the Lord God, for his beloved ones.

Their being prepared for it, and that by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, is their constant meetness for this most blessed state. Their fervent desires, that their life of grace which they now express, in living a life of faith on the Son of God, might be swallowed up in an heavenly and eternal life of glory, is the reason why they, as saints, and the beloved of God, desire to have their bodies dissolved by death, that they might depart from them, and be with Christ, which is far better.

This subject being truly great and sublime, I will aim to survey the verses which go before my text, and are properly belonging to it. Then I will set before you, the state of glory and blessedness which the souls of God's elect, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, enter immediately upon, on their departure from the body at death, under proper heads and divisions, for the clearer understanding of the same; and in these several sections, will endeavour to open and express the essence of what follows our text, to the end of the ninth verse. By this course, I apprehend, I shall be helped to unite the whole subject, and give a proper view of it, according to its revealed connection. May the Lord the Spirit inspire my mind, and guide me into a clear, spiritual, and right knowledge of the subject before me, that I may so explain this portion of scripture, as may reflect light on your minds,



comfort to your hearts, and excite your longings after heaven, glory, and a blessed immortality.

The subject before us, concerns the state of glory; and these scriptures, to be explained, concern that state. The apostle writes, if I may so say, a preface to it, which is contained in the thirteenth verse of the foregoing chapter, and with these words; "We believe, and therefore speak." Those articles of our most holy faith, believed and spoken of by the apostle, and primitive believers, and expressed by them with the utmost confidence, were such as respected the resurrection of the body, and the glory of the soul immediately upon the dissolution of the body. The first is expressed thus, "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." The design of this and the following verses is to comfort believers, against all sorts of afflictions; and to arm them against the fears of death, by suggesting to them the idea of an exceeding eternal weight of glory, which the souls of the elect partake of in their separate state, and which they will enjoy both in body and soul in the resurrection state, at the last day. He says, verse 15. "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God."

The incarnation, obedience, death, and resurrection of Christ, are all for the sake of God's elect. The ministry of the apostles, and gospel ministers, their gifts, graces, experiences, reproaches, temptations, afflictions, and persecutions, are also for their benefit: the good of saints and churches, and the glory of God, are hereby promoted. It is hereby that the abundant grace, held forth in their ministrations, may be further displayed in supporting them under their troubles, and delivering them out of them, for such displays of God's goodness and faithfulness, in being to them, under all these exercises, what he hath promised to be, "redound to the glory of God." As such valuable ends were answered, by the apostles, ministers, and churches, bearing various sufferings and afflictions, for Christ's sake, and the preaching the gospel, for the good of the churches, and the glory of God; the apostle adds, "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, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The renewal of the inward man, by the gracious operations of the Holy Ghost, day by day, the knowledge and inward evidence they had of it in their own souls in the increase of light, grace, and joy, this kept them from fainting, or stopping in their christian

course, or sinking under persecutions, temptations, and trials, and they were also divinely borne up with views of eternal glory and happiness, to which they had an eye, and this made present afflictions light and easy. So Paul says, verse 17. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (The one was nothing, the other was all) "while we (says he) 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." Thus in this context, is summed up, all that can be supposed we shall pass through in time, and also all that can possibly befall us, at any instant in time, and what will be our case, as saints, from the instant of our death, throughout eternity. All that befalls us in time is temporal, all in our disembodied state is eternal. The state of the soul after this temporal state is ended with us, is unseen in this life by us; otherwise than by faith, as well as what shall be after the day of judgment; so that the state of the soul, after death, must be here included, as that which belongs to eternal, as its state after the resurrection: both which states make together but one entire eternal.

All the while believers sojourn here, their souls are under the constant renewings of the

Holy Ghost. Their whole time, is so short in this present state, as to be stiled a moment: the ending of this moment is the beginning of eternity; and time thus ceasing, all afflictions cease with it, and eternal glory immediately takes place. And from the first possession of it, it is the same in kind, though not in degree, that will be continued throughout eternity. It is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And thus I am brought to the words of my text, which read thus; "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Paul calls our bodies, in which our souls dwell, an house; he shews the weakness and frailty of it, by stiling it an earthly house; he compares it to a tabernacle, or tent, which is easily taken down, and raised up again, as our bodies are by death, and will be at the resurrection; he speaks of death, as the dissolution of the body, at which time the soul leaves it; to all which he, by way of comfort, to carry beyond the fears of dissolution, expresses the confidence of faith, concerning the soul's immediate entrance into the state of glory, in these words; "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved," which is a reason why we faint not at the thoughts of dying, and leads us back to the sixteenth verse of the former

chapter, "For which cause we faint not;" because, "though our outward man decayeth, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." In perfect harmony with this, when the outward man is dissolved, we shall, from that moment, without the least interruption, have entrance into eternal glory. This is our cordial against the thoughts of dying, and the fears of death. "We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The apostle speaks of the reality of this blessed state, that the minds of saints might be divinely animated with the prospect; and he speaks of it under the expressions of "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The substance of what he thus expresses, is this; we know that if our bodies were dissolved by death, we should enter upon our eternal state; the prospect of which may well revive us, because we have "an house not made with hands," ready prepared to receive us. This house and state which we have a prospect of, is most exactly suited to our disembodied state, it is "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

I will now proceed to the immediate subject before us, and present the same to you under the following particulars.

First, I will set forth the state of glory and blessedness, on which the elect, believers in the

Lord Jesus Christ, enter immediately upon, at their departure from their bodies, at death.

Secondly, I will treat of the peculiarity and solemnity with which they are received by Christ, at their arrival in heaven, when our Lord will “present them before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.” See Jude, ver. 34.

Thirdly, I will declare, as far as enabled from the word, and by the Spirit of God, and as blessed with his inspiration, grace, and influence, what constitutes the blessedness and perfection of this state. And,

Lastly, how saints are employed in the kingdom of glory.

I am first to set forth and speak of the state of glory and blessedness, upon which the elect, believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, enter immediately, at their departure from their bodies, at death.

Death is the passage between time and eternity; by it we pass from the one to the other. When a believer is separated from the body by the force and violence of death, he enters immediately from a state of grace into a state of glory, blessedness, and immortality. That very moment he ceases to breathe the air of this present world, and ceases to have fellowship with the elements of the present system, he is received into the joy of his Lord, and admitted into heaven, which is both a place, an habitation, and

also a state of inconceivable glory and blessedness, life, and immortality. We commonly call the heavenly state, the state of glory, because the believer in his soul is the subject of glory. The glory of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, breaks forth immediately and directly upon the intellectual faculties of the mind, so that the regenerated soul is made glorious hereby, and shines by reflection, Christ, the Lord of glory, having shone upon it, and filled it with glory from himself. Hereby glory is revealed in the soul, as it is also to the soul, which is admitted to glory, and, as it were, implunged in it as its true and proper element. And, like as grace and holiness are inwrought in the soul, whilst in the body, by the Holy Ghost, so glory is revealed inherently in the minds of the saints in heaven, which breaks forth from them, and shines forth in and throughout their every faculty of understanding and will, by the same power of the Holy Ghost, and as the fruit of his personal indwelling in them: for he it is who will fill them with all the fulness of God.

The Holy Spirit, who is stiled the Spirit of God, and of glory, hath been pleased to set forth heaven as the habitation of departed saints. He reveals the saints entrance on it, to be entering on a state of blessedness and glory. He treats of the enjoyments of the glorified in this state, as consisting in seeing God, in enjoying eternal

life, in beholding Christ's glory, and in being with him as their Lord. Thus heaven is set forth in the scriptures as a place, and also as a state, and what the enjoyments of it consist in, are expressed.

As a place, heaven is stiled, in the inspired word, (or compared to) a mansion, an house, or dwelling-place. "In my Father's house, (says our blessed Lord) are many mansions," John xiv. 2. He stiles it "everlasting habitations," Luke xvi. 9. He calls it paradise, Luke xxiii. 43. The apostle calls it, "The third heaven," 2 Cor. xii. 2. he compares it to "a city, which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God:" to a "city which God hath prepared for his saints," Heb. xi. 10, 16. and in our text, to "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

To speak very briefly of heaven, as a place, one excellent writer says, "It is reasonable to suppose, that in some part of the heavens, God now manifests himself in a most glorious visible display of his majesty to the exceeding ineffable joy of those who shall be admitted to approach to that light which is now inaccessible. So that it will be a part of our eternal happiness, to live in those pure, clear, regions, where unknown glories, and most splendid sights, will present themselves to us, where we ourselves shall be cloathed with a brightness like that wherein our



Lord appeared to Stephen and Paul, and behold him in a greater majesty and brightness, than that was, because our capacities will be enlarged for more illustrious manifestations of God to us. We shall live in that place, where he dwells in light, unapproachable by mortal men, in the company of holy angels, who, as so many stars of glory, will add, if it be possible, to the glory and splendor of the place, and with our blessed Saviour, God-man, whose glorified body we shall behold; and so behold it that we shall bear the image of the heavenly, as we have borne the image of the earthly. We shall be made immortal, that is, we shall be ever with the Lord; and at, and after the resurrection, in such glorious bodies as his is: so that in ourselves we may see the glory of the Lord." I think this is most truly excellent.

That heaven is a place, appears from the scripture expressions concerning Christ's ascension into it. His living there, as the representative and intercessor of his church and people; his going there to prepare it for them; and his promise that he will come again and receive them to himself, that where he is they may be also.

These phrases imply heaven to be a place, as does our text before us, in which it is called "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." When it is called paradise, it is in allusion to the garden in Eden, which was of

God's planting, made and prepared by him. And Adam's body and mind were not more completely formed for it, than the elect soul will be for its entrance into heaven, and enjoying communion with God there. When this place is stiled the third heaven, it is to point it out as the seat of the infinite divine Majesty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the one incomprehensible Jehovah.

It is an everlasting habitation, "an house eternal in the heavens, a city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, dwell in it: there Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, are in their glorified bodies; so are also those saints, whose bodies were raised from the grave of death at the resurrection of Christ: and Jesus, the head of saints is there, in his glorified humanity, and he will remain there until his second appearing and coming in his kingdom and glory.

Into this house, eternal in the heavens, the elect believers in the Lord Jesus Christ enter immediately on their departure from their bodies at death. Heaven, as a state, is expressed in scripture, under the terms of rest, and refreshment of peace and joy. Believers at death, are described as entering into rest, and into the joy of their Lord, and dwelling in peace. The Lord speaking to his believing servant Abraham, concerning

heaven and glory, says, "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, thou shalt be buried in a good old age," Gen. xv. 15.

Abraham, at his death, was to go to his fathers, to the elect saints, who were gone to heaven before him, namely, Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, &c. He was to be removed from the church militant, and join the church triumphant, where an everlasting hallelujah is sung to Christ for his conquest and victory over death. What Abraham was to expect in heaven, is expressed by the Lord unto him in these words of the first verse of this chapter, where Jehovah says, "I am thy exceeding great reward." When he died, he was fully satisfied with the covenant goodness of the eternal Three, towards him; and it is expressly said, "he was gathered unto his people." Gen. xxv. 8. By his people, are meant his godly, believing predecessors, who were in heaven before him. The same is recorded concerning his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob. And when the angel Jehovah appeared unto Moses in the bush, he called himself the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Our Lord quotes this to prove the resurrection, saying, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto him." Luke xxii. 37, 38.

This is full scripture proof and evidence that the souls of these persons were with God in a state of glory and blessedness.

The apostle Paul expressly declares, concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that they "looked for a city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. He, speaking of the class of believers, from Abel to Abraham and Sarah, says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," Heb. xi. Then the apostle proceeds to shew that they sought a better country, that is, an heavenly. They had heaven in view; their hearts and hopes were there: the Lord had prepared it for them, and they for it. He had promised heaven to them, nor would he disappoint them of their hopes and expectations; for their earnest hope, and full assurance in themselves of eternal blessedness, (which they had the Lord's word for, as the ground of their confidence) were well pleasing in his sight. He himself had created in their minds, those earnest desires, and holy longings and expectations; "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, (says the apostle) for he hath prepared for them a city." Heb. xi. 16.

The state of blessedness and glory into which the elect, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are admitted immediately on their leaving their

bodies by death, is expressed in the old testament, by their being gathered to their fathers, by their entering into peace, Isaiah lvii. 2.

In the new testament, our Lord Jesus Christ expresses it by being removed from the body, and carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. He stiles it by the phrase of "everlasting habitations." He calls it, being in paradise: he is pleased to speak of it to his disciples thus, "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, ye may be also." John xiv. 2, 3. Our Lord Jesus Christ abolished death, and enlightened life and immortality by the gospel, by being absent from the body, and present with the Lord: and the enjoyments of this blessed place and state are set forth and expressed in the new testament, by eternal life, by seeing God, in having a sight of Christ, and by having a vision of him in glory.

In our text, and the verses connected with it, the apostle says, "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan,

being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

Here the state on which the elect enter, immediately at their dissolution, is stiled a "building of God," as elsewhere it is called a city. "Our conversation (or citizenship) is in heaven," Phil. iii. 20. It is also stiled, "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" so that its situation and durability is as fully expressed as possibly can be. Saints here below, whilst in their bodies, have indubitable evidence of it, by an inward knowledge and experience of Christ's person and salvation, who is the great inhabitant thereof. They, as one with him, are to be where he is, "to behold his glory." They, as created anew in Christ Jesus, long to be where he, their beloved, is, that they may see him face to face, and enjoy full communion with him. On this account, and for this reason, they groan for this state of inconceivable happiness: they groan for it, under the influence of the Spirit of God, and according to the will of God, they long for glory and immortality.

The elect of God are clothed in their souls in regeneration, with the clothing of inherent grace, with holiness, and sanctification: they are clothed upon with the garment of Christ's righteousness, which is imputed unto them. They are made pure in the blood of the Lamb, his

atonement being reckoned unto, and placed to their account. They will, as soon as death hath done its office on their bodies, be clothed with immortality and heavenly glory. Seeing they are thus clothed, when their souls are disembodied, they will not be found naked. Saints here below groan, as being burdened with the body itself, which is a clog and incumbrance unto them in their spiritual exercises. They also groan, because their bodies are the subjects of disorders and diseases, which sometimes make life in their bodies very burdensome to them. But they are chiefly burdened with the body of sin and death: hence they groan, or vehemently desire to be unclothed of their bodies, to get out of them, to be absent from them. Not that believers simply desire to be unclothed, for the sake of death, as death, to do its office; but they desire death, which only can unclothe them of their mortality; because then, at that moment, or immediately succeeding the disunion of body and soul, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, mortality will be swallowed up of life. All sin will be totally and for ever eradicated out of the soul: holiness inwrought by the Holy Ghost, in regeneration, will break forth in its eternal perfection. The life of grace will be swallowed up in glorious immortality and everlasting life; and this will be immediately upon the dissolution of the body. It is true some

saints will be the subjects of all this, without putting off, or being unclothed of their bodies: those who will remain and be alive in their bodies, at the second coming of Christ, will, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, experience all sin and mortality, in soul and body, swallowed up, and immortality, glory, and life everlasting, break forth in their persons, so that they will at once bear the image of the heavenly, the Lord from heaven.

I proceed, secondly, to treat of the peculiar solemnity, with which the saints are received by Christ, at their arrival in heaven, when our Lord will present them before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

I ground this upon the following passage of scripture, "He is able to keep you from falling, and to present you before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," Jude, ver. 24. The state on which the elect enter by death, is that of a glorious immortality. They are where Jesus is; they see him face to face; they see him as he is; they join the congregation of saints in heaven; they, with them, worship the exalted Lamb. They have a glory, which breaks forth from them, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; they have also a glory, which breaks forth upon them, from the light and splendour of Christ, the Sun of righteousness, who will



be their everlasting light, and their everlasting glory.

If we consider the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the one ever blessed and incomprehensible Jehovah, to the elect, from everlasting to everlasting, and survey their displays thereof, in election, redemption, effectual calling, and perseverance to the end, we cannot but conceive, that there must be a most glorious out-breaking of it when they are taken up to heaven, and admitted into glory. It is sometimes the case, whilst death is unclothing saints, and dissolving their bodies, that they are filled with the joys of the Holy Ghost, and eternal glory breaks in upon them. Though it is not always thus, yet Christ, by a voice from heaven, hath pronounced, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." This is as true as God is true, for to this, the Lord the Spirit hath set his seal; "YEA, saith the Spirit."

There is also a most gracious promise concerning their free entrance into heaven, which runs thus, "An entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter i. 11.

They enter into heaven with everlasting joy and triumph. The eternal Three have now an opportunity of expressing their mutual love to

them, such as never occurred before; for now all their eternal purposes of grace, respecting all that was to be wrought in their souls, being completely finished, nothing follows, but glory everlasting; and like as upon their regeneration and conversion to the Lord, the love of the Father, the salvation of the Son, and the gracious energy of the Holy Ghost, were most divinely displayed, and full evidence was given that Jehovah resteth in his love, and joys over them with singing, so on their entrance into heaven, there is a fresh display and out-breaking of everlasting love unto them. Each of the persons in the essential Godhead, express their mutual satisfaction, at the arrival of the saints in the kingdom of glory. The love of the Father, which is the spring and fountain of all divine and spiritual blessings, is most divinely manifested and displayed, in such a way and manner, to the soul just entered the "house eternal in the heavens," as exceeds our utmost conception. The glories of Christ break forth; and his salvation, in all the perfection of it, now appears, beyond all it ever did before. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and his everlasting consolations, will be so displayed and evidenced, as will fill the mind with all the fulness of God. The elect soul is received by Christ, with infinite pleasure and delight; the peculiarity and solemnity of which I am now to set before you;

and I shall find what is to be delivered, on a passage in the epistle of Jude, who closes his short, but most excellent epistle, with the following doxology; "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and present you before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to, the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen."

In the former part of these words, we have two great blessings set before us; one of which belongs to time, the other to eternity. A very comprehensive expression is made use of concerning what belongs to saints this side heaven; Christ is able to keep them from falling; he is the protector, keeper, and defence of his people, and he will not only keep them to the end, and bring them to heaven, but he will consummate all their blessedness, by presenting them "before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." So that here we have heaven opened, the elect saint shining forth in his eternal glory, as Christ presents him before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

The peculiarity and solemnity of this presentation of the disembodied soul, consists in the following particulars; it comes into the immediate presence of God, and Christ will receive it to the glory of God; he will present it faultless, and with exceeding joy: he will present it be-

fore God, and he will so present it, that it shall have near access to God; he will set, or place the elect soul before him, so that it will be illuminated with the glory of the divine perfections, and receive intuitive knowledge of God, the Father of glory, and be filled with the reflection of it. Thus God will manifest his glory, suitable to the heavenly state, and become immediately and ultimately the fountain of joy and blessedness to the elect soul, thus brought near before him, and presented by Christ unto him. The Lord Christ will also present the saint before the presence of his glory, that he may set his beloved at his right hand, and thus advance him to the utmost honour: he will set the elect soul in his own immediate view, where he will fill it with glory, behold it with delight, and express the uttermost of his love.

This great act thus passes, and Christ reviews every individual soul that believes in him, at death. This great solemnity of presenting saints in heaven with exceeding joy, follows the soul's entrance into glory. The Lord Jesus, who "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," will keep his saints from calling to glorification. He is their protector, and captain of salvation: he receives their souls at death, to his everlasting embraces, and presents them "before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head

and Saviour of his church, presents all his people, in his person, obedience, and sacrifice, complete before his Father. He continues to represent them in his intercessory office, complete, "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." He will have the presenting every elect soul before the Father and the Spirit, as the object of electing love, as fully justified, pardoned, purified, sanctified, and wrought up to the pattern drawn in the infinite mind of Jehovah, in his eternal decrees and purposes before all time. Our Lord will place the soul in his immediate presence, and this he will do with exceeding joy. It will be truly satisfactory to him, to see the travail of his soul brought home to the haven of everlasting rest: he will present the soul "before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

This presentation shews the love of Christ to the disembodied spirit, who, though unclothed of its body, yet the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, receives it to his everlasting embraces, places it before himself, and gives it a full view of his glory, and presents it before the Father and the Spirit, as the object and subject of the love of the holy Trinity; in whom the Father beholds one on whom his heart was fixed before the world began, in whom Jesus sees the glory and perfection of his righteousness and blood shine forth; in whom the eternal Spirit

beholds his inherent grace wrought and stamped on it, shining forth in glory and immortality.

Thus the eternal Three will rejoice in the admission of the new-born soul to glory, who will now enter into the joy of his Lord, and have such intuitive and real sights of Christ, and his glory, as will swallow up the mind, render it impeccable, and fix it on him, without the least interruption, for ever; and be surrounded and possessed of an exceeding, eternal weight of glory: and thus the elect, redeemed soul, being received and acknowledged by the Redeemer, will be crowned with glory everlasting.

I proceed, thirdly, to declare, as far as enabled from the word, and by the Spirit, and as blessed with his inspiration, grace, and influence, what constitutes the blessedness and perfection of this state.

One part of the blessedness and perfection of this state, consists in a vision of Christ, in beholding him face to face, in seeing him as he is. This the scripture reveals to be the happiness and felicity of this intermediate state, between death and the resurrection. Our Lord, in his address to his divine Father, says, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory." John xvii. 24. And Paul speaks of believers, "being absent from the body, and present with the Lord:" he expresses

it as his desire, to “depart out of the body, and to be with Christ.” Phil. i. 23. In this state of glory, saints have a view of all the glorious perfections of Godhead, as displayed in the person of the God-man, in whom all of God shines forth. In him, saints have a clear knowledge of and communion with the essential Three; and it is conceived, and I think the conception is truly glorious, that the elect in heaven, will know how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is one God, without any diversity or separation of nature.

In seeing Christ, saints will partake of his communicative glory and happiness, and know as they are known. They will have eternal life, which will consist in having the faculties of their souls, the understanding and will, upon which all operations depend, perpetually engaged in taking in the knowledge of God, and in having uninterrupted enjoyment of communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by the glorious medium of the God-man, Christ Jesus, who will be to his saints the fountain, spring, and Lord of glory.

In heaven they will conceive God in Christ to be the chief good. The understanding will clearly know him in his everlasting love; for here God will communicate himself in the whole fulness and perfection of his love: in consequence of which the will of saints will be en-

gaged in the most ardent love to him, and in finding everlasting satisfaction in his love. All the faculties being engaged in beholding the glories of the Godhead, in the person of Jesus Christ, and in enjoying communion with the Father and the Son, to the utmost stretch of our wishes: this will be our consummation and perfection, in the state of glory.

The Lord Christ displaying his mediatorial, and manifesting his relative glory, and as the uncreated Sun of everlasting light, shining in the blaze and lustre of his personal and essential glory, the saints will be completely blessed. They will be eternally satisfied, when they enter on this inheritance in light; they will find Christ, the light of everlasting life, shine upon all of them, and also individually on each and every one of them; and like as in our present world, all partake of the natural light, without the least injury to another, each having the same share in it, and benefit of it; so Christ, who is the light of the heavenly inheritance, will shine within and upon each individual in glory, and they shall so fully partake of him, as to be completely filled with glory from him.

The place of the blessed, being in the house eternal in the heavens, where the eternal Three display their manifestative glory, and communicate their love to the uttermost. The state of the saints departed, being a state of rest, re-



freshment, life, peace, blessedness, and perfection. The enjoyments of saints in heaven, where they enter on this eternal state, being expressed in scripture, by eternal life, seeing God, beholding Christ, in which the beatific vision consists, in being with the Lord, and in having the fullest enjoyment of everlasting love; (for thus it is written, "They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. vii. 15, 17.) No marvel saints in our world, long to be unclothed of their bodies by death, that they may partake of these immortal joys.

Our apostle, at the fifth verse of the chapter, from whence I took my text, says, "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit."

Heaven was wrought, or to use Christ's words, "prepared for them." They were also prepared for it. The Holy Ghost was given unto them; a gift beyond eternal glory: he dwelt in them, preparing them for the actual enjoyment of heaven: he was bestowed on them, as a gift from God, according to the economy of the everlasting covenant.

This being the case, these persons, and Paul for them, might well say, "Therefore we are always confident, (that heaven is our home, that there is but a step between us and death, and but that step between us and eternal glory) knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord; wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him," 2 Cor. v. 5, 9.

I come, in the last place, to shew how saints are employed in heaven. As the understanding will there know God in all his persons, perfections, will, council, covenant, purposes, grace, and glory, in an ineffable manner and degree; so the will, which follows the understanding, will be swallowed up in an everlasting acquiescence, and satisfaction in God, and in the enjoyment of his love; so that the employment of the blessed in glory, will be to worship the Lord in the beauties of holiness, and with one heart, and one voice, to "ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

The saints in heaven, are a worshipping assembly. The eternal Three, are the object of their worship. It is influenced, and drawn

forth, gloriously and divinely exercised through the in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost. The God-man is the medium of worship: the love of the Father flows through him into all their minds: he communicates himself unto them, in the fulness of his love: so that they are filled in their understandings and wills, with all the fulness of God; and the knowledge of it fills their understandings, and the enjoyment of it satisfies their wills; so that there is everlasting happiness enjoyed in the love of God, which is the spring and fountain of all the blessedness of heaven.

The grace of saints in heaven is expressed in love, perpetual love to God. This is expressed in admiring, adoring thoughts of the out-goings of God's heart towards them, from everlasting.

In the person of the God-man, all the personalities in Jehovah, and all the mysteries of the love of the essential Three, are realized.

The mysterious plan of redemption, drawn in the divine mind, before the world began, and executed in the fulness of time by the God-man, is now seen in all its glories.

The grace of the Holy Ghost, displayed in the economy of grace, and which will be continued in heaven to eternity, in his personal in-dwelling in the saints, will be now apprehended, so as to fill the minds of the elect with transporting gratitude and praise. And they will be

eternally engaged in worshipping Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for their everlasting love, for their covenant acts of grace and mercy; for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, from all sin, sorrow, and death, for all they knew and experienced of it on earth, and for a fuller knowledge and enjoyment of it in heaven.

May the Lord bless what is written. Amen.

THE END.