

of faith and holiness, notwithstanding the opposition of all the world against him; yet it may be no small encouragement to him to find others of the same mind, acting at the same rate and upon the same grounds.

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## SERMON III.

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HOW GOD IS HIS PEOPLE'S GREAT REWARD.

*I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*—Genesis xv. 1.

ABRAHAM is called “the friend of God;” (James ii. 23;) the Lord spake with him familiarly; (Gen. xvii. 22;) he was made of God’s privy council. (Gen. xviii. 17.) And in the text: “The word of the Lord came unto” him “in a vision.” Representations of things in a vision differ from revelations by dreams. (Gen. xxxi. 11.) And what was the word that came to this holy patriarch in a vision? “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward:” words too great for any man or angel fully to expound. Both the Hebrew and Greek carry the phrase very high: שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד “I am thy super-abundant, very exceeding much reward,” ὁ μισθός σου πολλὸς σφοδρὰ. In the text is a climax; it riseth, as the waters of the sanctuary, higher: “I am thy reward, thy great reward, thy exceeding great reward.”\* There are four things here to be spoken to:—

- I. *That nothing beside God can be the saints’ reward.*
- II. *How God is their reward.*
- III. *How God comes to be their reward.*
- IV. *Wherein the exceeding greatness of this reward consists.*

I. *That nothing beside God can be the saints’ reward.*

1. Nothing on earth can be their reward. The glistening of the world dazzles men’s eyes; but, like the apples of Sodom, it doth not so much delight as delude. The world is *res nihili*, [“a thing of nought,”] gilded emptiness. (Prov. xxiii. 5.) The world is made circular, the heart in the figure of a triangle; a circle cannot fill a triangle: the world is enough to busy us, not to fill us.† “In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits.” (Job xx. 22.) It seems a riddle, to have sufficiency, yet not have enough. The meaning is,—When he enjoys most of the creature, yet *aliquid deest*, “there is something wanting.” When king Solomon had put all the creatures into a limbeck, [alembic,] and went to extract and still out the spirits, they turned to froth: הַכֹּל הִנָּהוּ קֶבֶל “All is vanity.” (Eccles. i. 2.) God never intended [that] we should dig happiness out of the earth which he hath cursed.

\* *Mercēs tua magna nimis.*—GROTIUS. † *Fumus et ventus sunt omnia mundana.*  
—AUGUSTINUS, tom. ix. “All things terrestrial are but smoke and wind.”—EDIT.

2. *Heaven* itself is not a saint's reward: "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" (Psalm lxxiii. 25.) "*There* are angels and archangels,"\* saith Musculus; ay, but though these are for a saint's comfort, yet not properly for his reward. Communion with seraphims is excellent, yet can no more make a saint's reward than the light of the stars can make day.

II. QUESTION. *How is God his people's reward?*

ANSWER. In bestowing himself upon them. The great blessing of the covenant is, "I am thy God." The Lord told Abraham, kings should come out of his loins, and he would give the land of Canaan to him and his seed; (Gen. xvii. 6;) but all this did not amount to blessedness. That which made up the portion was, "I will be their God." (Verse 8.) God "will not only see that the saints shall be rewarded, but his own self will be their reward."† A king may reward his subjects with gratuities, but he bestows himself upon his queen: God saith to every believer, as he did to Aaron, "I am thy part and thine inheritance;" (Num. xviii. 20;) and as the king of Israel said to Benhadad, "I am thine, and all that I have." (1 Kings xx. 4.)

Abraham sent away the sons of the concubines with a few gifts; but he settled the inheritance upon Isaac. (Gen. xxv. 5, 6.) God sends away the wicked with riches and honour, but makes over *himself* to his people. They have not only the gift, but the Giver. And what can be more? As Micah said, "What have I more?" (Judges xviii. 24;) so what hath God more to give than himself? What greater dowry than Deity? God is not only the saints' rewarder, but their "reward."‡ "The Almighty shall be thy gold:" (Job xxii. 25;) so much the Hebrew word imports.§ The sum of all is: the saints' portion lies in God: "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup."|| (Psalm xvi. 5.)

QUESTION. "But how doth God give himself to his people? Is not his essence incommunicable?"

ANSWER. True, the saints cannot partake of God's very essence; (an error of Montanus and the Familists;) the riches of the Deity are too great to be received in specie.¶ But the saints shall have all in God, that may be for their comfort: they shall partake so much of God's likeness, his love, his influence, and the irradiations of his glory, (1 John iii. 2; John xvii. 26, 22,) as doth astonish and fill the vessels of mercy, that they run over with joy.

III. QUESTION. *How God comes to be his people's reward.*

ANSWER. Through Jesus Christ; his blood, being *sanguis Dei*,

\* *Ibi sunt angeli et archangeli.*—MUSCULUS. † *Non tantum sua, sed se, nobis impertit.* ‡ *Merces idem valet, quod hereditas.*—CALVINUS. "The meaning of reward is as full and comprehensive as that of inheritance."—EDIT. § *בצר Aurum lectissimum.* ["The choicest gold."]—JUNICUS, BUXTORFIUS. || *Notant grammatici, rectionem plurium synonymorum auzesim denotare.* "Grammarians remark that the government of several synonymous words by one another, denotes augmentation."—EDIT. ¶ *Perperam et impie delirarunt, qui complementum Dei (Eph. iii. 19) interpretati sunt plenam Divinitatem, quasi homines fiant Deo aequales.*—CALVINUS. "They uttered gross and impious nonsense, who interpreted 'the fulness of God' (Eph. iii. 19) to be 'the full Divinity;' as though men might become equal with God."—EDIT.

“the blood of God,” hath merited this glorious reward for them. (Acts xx. 28.) Though, in respect of free grace, this reward is a donative, yet in respect of Christ's blood it is a purchase. (Eph. i. 14.) How precious should Christ be to us! Had not he died, the portion had never come into our hands.

IV. QUESTION. *Wherein the exceeding greatness of this reward consists.*

ANSWER 1. God is *merces ampla*, “a satisfying reward.” “I am God Almighty:” (Gen. xvii. 1:) the word for Almighty, אֱלֹהִים signifies “him that hath sufficiency.” God is a whole ocean of blessedness; \* which while the soul is bathing in, it cries out in a divine ecstasy, “I have enough.” Here is fulness, but no surfeit: “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” † (Psalm xvii. 15.) When I awake out of the sleep of death, having my soul embellished with the illustrious beams of thy glory, I shall be satisfied. In God there is not only sufficiency, but redundancy; not only *plenitudo vasis*, “the fulness of the vessel,” but *plenitudo fontis*, “the fulness of the fountain.” When the whole world was defaced, Noah had the copy and emblem of it in the ark. In God, this Ark of blessedness, are all good things virtually to be found. Therefore Jacob, having God for his reward, could say, “I have enough;” or as it is in the original, לֹא-אֶבֶד; “I have all.” ‡ (Gen. xxxiii. 11.) God is all marrow and sweetness; he is “such an exuberant reward as exceeds our very faith.” § If the queen of Sheba's heart fainted within her to see all king Solomon's glory, what would it have done to have beheld the astonishing and magnificent reward which God bestows upon his favourites?

2. God is *merces adæquata*, “a suitable reward.” The soul, being spiritual, must have something homogeneal and suitable, to make it happy; and that is God. Light is not more suitable to the eye, nor melody to the ear, than God is to the soul. He pours-in “spiritual blessings;” (Eph. i. 3;) he enricheth it with grace, feasts it with his love, crowns it with heavenly dignity.

3. God is *merces jucunda*, “a pleasant reward.” He is the quintessence of delight, all beauty and love. To be feeding upon the thoughts of God, is delicious: “My meditation of him shall be sweet.” (Psalm civ. 34.) It is delightful to the bee to suck the flower; so, by holy musing, to suck out some of the sweetness in God, carries a secret delight in it. To have a prospect of God only by faith, is pleasant: “In whom believing ye rejoice:” (1 Peter i. 8:) then what will the joy of vision be, when we shall have a clear intuitive sight of him, and be laid in the bosom of Divine Love? Is God so sweet a reward in affliction? “I am exceeding joyful,” Ὑπερπερισσυστομαι, “in all our tribulation.” (2 Cor. vii. 4.) Philip,

\* *Perfectionem omnium bonorum in se uno comprehendit.*—RIVETUS. “God embraces in himself alone the perfection of all that is good.”—EDIT. † *Spiritualium vult felicitatem quando facie ad faciem se nobis fruendum exhibeat Deus.*—CALVINUS. “He desires spiritual bliss, when God shall disclose himself to us, face to face, in order to our enjoyment of him.”—EDIT. ‡ *Ipsè Deus sufficit ad præmium.*—AUGUSTINUS. “God himself is a sufficient reward.”—EDIT. § *Præmium quod fide non attingitur.*—IDEM.

landgrave of Hesse, said that in his confinement he had the divine consolations of the martyrs. Then what a delicious reward will God be in heaven! This may be better felt than expressed. The godly, entering upon their celestial reward, are said to "enter into the joy of their Lord." (Matt. xxv. 21.) O amazing! The saints enter into God's own joy: they have not only the joy which God bestows, but the joy which God enjoys.\*

4. God is *merces transcendens*, "a transcendent reward." The painter, going to take the picture of Helena, not being able to draw her beauty to the life, drew her face covered with a veil. So, when we speak of God's excellencies, we must draw a veil. He is so super-eminent a reward, as [that] we cannot set him forth in all his oriency and magnificence. Put the whole world in balance with him, and it is as if you should weigh a feather with a mountain of gold. God hath got the ascendant of all other things: he is better than the world, better than the soul, better than heaven: he is *Causa causati*, "the original Cause of all" good "things;" † "nothing is sweet without him;" ‡ he perfumes and sanctifies our comforts, he turns the venison into a blessing.

5. God is *merces infinita*, "an infinite reward." And being infinite, these two things follow: (1.) *This reward cannot come to us by way of merit.*—Can we merit God? Can finite creatures merit an infinite reward? (2.) *God being an infinite reward, there can be no defect or scantiness in it.*—"There is no want in that which is infinite." § Some may ask, "Is God sufficient for every individual saint?" Yes; if the sun, which is but a finite creature, disperseth its light to the univerec, then much more God, who is infinite, distributes glory to the whole number of the elect. Every individual Christian hath a propriety in a community; as every person enjoys the whole sun to himself, so every believer possesseth whole God to himself: the Lord hath land enough to give all his heirs. Throw a thousand buckets into the sea, and there is water enough in the sea to fill them: though there be millions of saints and angels, there is enough in God to fill them. God being an infinite reward, though he is continually giving out of his fulness to others, yet he hath not the less; his glory is imparted, not impaired; it is a distribution without a diminution.

6. God is *merces honorifica*, "an honourable reward." Honour is the height of men's ambition: Aristotle calls it *μεγιστον των αγαθων* ["the greatest of blessings"]. Alas! worldly honour is but a "pleasing fancy." || Honour hath oft a speedy burial: but to enjoy God is the head of honour. What greater dignity than to be taken up into communion with the God of glory, and to possess a kingdom with him, bespangled with light, and seated above all the visible orbs?

\* *O gaudium vincens omne gaudium, extra quod non est gaudium!* "O joy surpassing all joys, and beyond which no other joy can exist!"—EDIT. † *Quod efficit tale id est magis tale.* "That which endows any thing with certain qualities, must itself possess those qualities in a more eminent degree."—EDIT. ‡ *Quicquid præter Deum est, dulce non est.*—AUGUSTINUS. § *In infinito non datur ελλειψις.*  
|| Μετα πολλης φαντασιαι. (Acts xxv. 23.) ["With much pomp."]

A great heir, while he is in a foreign land, may be despised; but in his own country he is had in veneration. Here the people of God are as princes in a disguise; (1 John iii. 1;) but they shall have honour enough in heaven, when they shall be clothed with white robes, and sit with Christ upon his throne. (Rev. iii. 21.)

7. God is *merces æterna*, "an everlasting reward." Mortality is the disgrace of all earthly things.\* They are in their fruition surfeiting, and in their duration dying; they are like the metal [that] glass is made of, which, when it shines brightest, is nearest melting: but God is an eternal reward. Eternity cannot be measured by years, jubilees, ages, nor the most slow motion of the eighth sphere. Eternity makes glory weighty: "This God is our God for ever and ever." (Psalm xlvi. 14.) A Christian cannot say, "I have an estate in the world, and I shall have it for ever;" but he may say, "I have God, and I shall have him for ever." O ye saints of God, your praying and repenting are but for a while, but your reward is for ever. As long as God is God, he will be rewarding you. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever:" † עֲלֵיךָ (Hosea ii. 19:) God marries himself to his people, and this admits of no divorce. God's love to his elect is as unchangeable as to Christ: "My portion for ever." (Psalm lxxiii. 26.) This portion cannot be spent, because it is infinite; nor lost, because it is eternal. We read of a "river of pleasures" at God's right hand. (Psalm xxxvi. 8.) "But may not this river in time be dried up?" No; for there is a fountain at the bottom: "With thee," Lord, "is the fountain of life." (Verse 9.)

QUESTION. "But if this reward be so exceeding great, will it not overwhelm us?"

ANSWER. In the other world our faculties shall be extended, and through the Mediator Christ we shall be made capable of receiving this reward. Put a back of steel to a glass, and you may see your face in it: so, Christ's human nature being put as a back of steel to the divine, God's glory will be seen and enjoyed by us. There is no seeing the sun in the circle, but in the beams: so, whatever of God is made visible to us, will be through the golden beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

QUESTION. "Wherein appears the certainty of this reward?"

ANSWER. God, who is the Oracle of truth, hath asserted it. A charter, legally confirmed under the Broad Seal, is unquestionable: the public faith of heaven is engaged to make good this reward; God's oath is laid at pledge. ‡ (Psalm lviii. 11.) Nay, God hath not only pawned his truth, the most orient pearl of his crown; but he hath given the anticipation and first-fruits of this reward to his saints, in joy and consolation, (Gal. v. 22,) which assures them of a harvest afterwards.

QUESTION. "But when shall we be possessed of this reward?"

\* *Inter peritura vivimus*.—SENECA. "We live among perishing things."—EDIT.  
 † *Adsciscam mihi in sponsam*.—CORNELIUS A LAPIDE. ‡ *Væ nobis, si nec juranti Deo credimus!*—AUGUSTINUS. "Woe unto us, if we do not believe God, when he swears by himself!"—EDIT.

ANSWER. The time is not long: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me." (Rev. xxii. 12.) Sense and reason think it a long interval; but faith looks at the reward as near. Through a perspective-glass, the object which is at some distance seems near to the eye: so, faith looking through the perspective-glass of a promise, the reward seems near. Faith as it doth substantiate, so it doth anticipate, things not seen; it makes them present. (Eph. ii. 6.)

QUESTION. "But why is this reward at all deferred?"

ANSWER 1. God sees it not fit that we should yet receive it. Our work is not done; we have not yet "finished the faith." A day-labourer doth not receive his pay till his work be done: even Christ's reward was deferred till he had completed his mediatory work, and said upon the cross, "It is finished."

2. God defers the reward, that we may live by faith. We are taken with the reward, but God is more taken with our faith. No grace honours God like faith: (Rom. iv. 20:) God hath given himself to us by promise; faith trusts God's bond, and patience waits for the payment.

3. God adjourns the reward a while, to sweeten it, and make it more welcome to us when it comes. After all our labours, watchings, conflicts, how comfortable will the reward be! Nay, "the longer the reward is deferred, it will be the greater:" \* the longest voyages have the largest returns.

If still it be asked, "When shall the time of this reward be?" I say, The righteous shall receive part of their reward at death. No sooner is the soul out of the body, but it is "present with the Lord." † (2 Cor. v. 8.) And the full coronation is at the resurrection, when the soul and body shall be re-united and perfected in glory. Christians, faint not in your voyage, though troublesome; you are within a few leagues of heaven: your "salvation is now nearer than when" you "first believed." (Rom. xiii. 11.) Several orollaries follow.

#### USE I. INFORMATION.

BRANCH 1. Hence it is evident, that *it is lawful to look to the future reward.*—God is our reward; is it not lawful to look to him? Moses had an eye "to the recompence of the reward:" (Heb. xi. 26:) what was this reward, but God himself? Verse 27: "As seeing him who is invisible." Looking to the reward quickens us in religion: it is like the rod of myrtle in the traveller's hand, which, [it] is said, revives his spirits, and makes him walk without being weary. Who that is subject to fainting-fits will not carry cordial-water about him?

BRANCH 2. If God be such an exceeding great reward, then *it is not in vain to engage in his service.*—It was a slanderous speech: "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God." (Mal. iii. 14.) The infinite

\* *Quò longius defertur, eò suavius letatur.* † *Piæ animæ a corporibus solutæ cum Deo vivunt.*—CALVINUS. "The souls of the pious, when set free from the body, live for ever with God."—EDIT.

Jehovah gives a reward that is as far beyond our thoughts as it is above our deserts. How apt are persons through ignorance or mistake to misjudge the ways of God! They think it will not quit the cost to be religious: they speak evil of religion before they have tried it; as if one should condemn a meat before he hath tasted it. Beside the *vales*\* which God gives in his life, provision, protection, peace, there is a glorious reward shortly coming; (Psalm xix. 11;) God himself is the saints' dowry. God hath a true monopoly; "he hath those riches which are nowhere else to be had,—the riches of salvation."† He is such a gold-mine as no angel can find the bottom: "The unsearchable riches of Christ." (Eph. iii. 8.) Is it vain, then, to serve God? A Christian's work is soon over, but not his reward. He hath such a harvest coming as cannot be fully inned; it will be always reaping-time in heaven. How great is that reward which thoughts cannot measure, nor time finish!

BRANCH 3. *See the egregious folly of such as refuse God.*—Psalm lxxxi. 11: "Israel would none of me." Is it usual to refuse rewards? If a man should have a vast sum of money offered him, and he should refuse it, his discretion would be called in question. God offers an incomprehensible reward to men, yet they refuse; like the loadstone, which refuseth gold and pearl, and draws the rusty iron to it. Man by his fall lost his head-piece: he sees not where his interest lies. He flies from God, as if he were afraid of salvation; and what doth he refuse God for? The pleasures of the world: ‡ we may write upon them, Προσκαιρα ["Temporary"]. These are like Noah's dove, which brought an olive-branch in her mouth, but quickly flew out of the ark; and to lose God for these perishables, is a prodigy of folly worse than that of Lysimachus, who for a draught of water lost his kingdom. We read in scripture of two cups: Psalm xvi. 5: "The Lord is the portion of my cup." They who refuse this cup shall have another cup to drink of: Psalm xi. 6: "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone: this shall be the portion of their cup."

BRANCH 4. If God be such an immense reward, then *see how little cause the saints have to fear death.*—Are men afraid to receive rewards? There is no way to live but by dying.§ Christians would be clothed with glory, but are loath to be unclothed; they pray, "Thy kingdom come;" and when God is leading them thither, they are afraid to go. What makes us desirous to stay here? There is more in the world to wean us than to tempt us. Is it not a valley of tears? and do we weep to leave it? Are we not in a wilderness among fiery serpents? and are we loath to leave their company? Is there a better Friend we can go to than God? Are there any sweeter

\* Pecuniary gratuities to servants; sometimes written *vails*.—EDIT. † *In uno Deo omnes florent gemæ ad salutem.* ‡ Αφυσιας σημειον διατριβην εν τοις περι το σωμα.—ΕΠΙΤΕΤΟΣ. "It is a mark of stupidity to spend one's time in corporeal and sensual pleasures."—EDIT. § *Aliæ hæreditates in morte deseruntur; sed ad solidam hujus possessionem per mortem immittimur.*—RIVETUS. "Other inheritances must be left when we die; but it is death itself that admits us to the actual possession of this eternal inheritance."—EDIT.

smiles, or softer embraces, than his? Sure, those who know [that] "when they die they go to receive their reward, should neither be fond of life nor fearful of death:"\* the pangs of death to believers are but the pangs of travail by which they are born into glory.

## USE II. EXHORTATION.

BRANCH 1. *Believe this reward.*—Look not upon it as a Platonical idea or fancy. Sensualists question this reward, because they do not see it: they may as well question the verity of their souls, because, being spirits, they cannot be seen. Where should our faith rest, but upon a divine testimony? We believe there are such places as Africa and America, (though we never saw them,) because travellers who have been there affirm it; and shall we not believe the eternal recompences, when *αυτος εφη*, God "himself affirms it?" The whole earth hangs upon the word of God's power: and shall not our faith hang upon the word of his truth? Let us not be sceptics in matters of such importance. The Rabbins tell us, the great dispute between Cain and Abel was about the future reward. Abel affirmed it, Cain denied it. The disbelief of this grand truth is the cause of the flagitiousness of the age. Immorality begins at infidelity; (Heb. iii. 12;) to mistrust a future reward is to question the Bible, and to destroy a main article of our Creed,—“Life everlasting.” Such atheists as look upon God's promise but as a forged deed, put God to swear against them, that they shall never “enter into his rest.” (Verse 18.)

BRANCH 2. If God be such an exceeding great reward, *let us endeavour that he may be our reward.*—In other things we love a propriety: “This house is mine; this lordship and manor is mine;” and why not, “This God is mine?” “Go,” saith Pharaoh to Moses and Aaron, “sacrifice to your God;” not, “my God.” The leaving out one word in a will may spoil the will: “the leaving out of this word ‘my,’ is the loss of heaven.”† Psalm lxxvii. 6: “God, even our own God, shall bless us.” He who can pronounce this Shibboleth, “my God,” is the happiest man alive.

QUESTION. “How shall we know that God is our reward?”

ANSWER 1. *If God hath given us the earnest of this reward.*—This earnest is his Spirit: ‡ “Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.” (Eph. i. 13, 14.) Where God gives his Spirit for an earnest, there he gives himself for a portion: Christ gave the *purse* to Judas, not his Spirit.

QUESTION. “How shall we know we have God's Spirit?”

ANSWER. The Spirit “carries influence along with it:” § it consecrates the heart, making it a sacrary, or “holy of holies;” it sanctifies the fancy, causing it to mint holy thoughts; it sanctifies the will, strongly biasing it to good. As musk, lying among linen, perfumes it, so the Spirit of God in the soul perfumes it with sanctity.

\* *Καλον το θνησκειν ος κερδος θνησκειν φερει.*—MENANDER. † *Tolle MEUM et tolle DEUM.*—See vol. ii. p. 539.—EDIT. ‡ *Pignus redditur, arrha retinetur.*—HIERONYMUS. “A pledge is restored to him who left it; but earnest-money is always retained by the receiver.”—EDIT. § *Est vehiculum influentia.*



OBJECTION. "But are not the unregenerate said to partake of the Holy Ghost?"

ANSWER. They may have the common gifts of the Spirit, not the special grace; they may have the enlightening of the Spirit, not the anointing; they may have the Spirit *movere*, not *vivere*, "move" in them, not "live" in them. But, to partake of the Holy Ghost aright, is when the Spirit leaves lively impressions upon the heart; it softens, sublimates, transforms it,\* writing a law of grace there. (Heb. viii. 10.) By this earnest, we have a title to the reward.

2. If God be our reward, *he hath given us a hand to lay hold on him.*—This hand is faith: "Lord, I believe." (Mark ix. 24.) A weak faith justifies; † as a weak hand can tie the knot in marriage, a weak faith can lay hold on a strong Christ: the nature of faith is assent joined with affiance. (Acts viii. 37; xvi. 31.) Faith doth *διοποιεῖν*, "make God ours." Other graces make us *like* Christ; faith makes us *one with* him. And this faith is known by its virtue. "No precious stone," saith Cardan, "but hath some virtue latent in it." Precious faith hath virtue in it: it quickens and ennobles, it puts worth into our services; (Rom. xvi. 26;) it puts a difference between the "Abba, Father," of a saint, and the "Ave-Mary" of a Papist.

3. We may know God is our reward by *our choosing him.*—Religion is not a matter of chance, but of choice. (Psalm cxix. 30.) Have we weighed things in the balance, and, upon mature deliberation, made an election,—“We will have God upon any terms?” Have we sat down and reckoned the cost? what religion *must* cost us,—the parting with our lusts; and what it may cost us,—the parting with our lives? Have we resolved, through the assistance of grace, to own Christ when the swords and staves are up? and to sail with him, not only in a pleasure-boat, but in a man-of-war? ‡ This choosing God speaks him to be ours: hypocrites profess God out of worldly design, not religious choice.

4. God is known to be our reward by *the complacential delight we take in him.* (Psalm xxxvii. 4—8.)—How do men please themselves with rich portions! What delight doth a bride take in her jewels! Do we delight in God as our eternal portion? § Indeed, he is a whole paradise of delight; all excellencies meet in God, as the lines in the centre. Is ours a genuine delight? Do we not only delight in God's blessings, but in God himself? Is it a superior delight? Do we delight in God above other things? David had his crown-revenues to delight in; but his delight in God took place of all other delights: "God, my exceeding joy;" (Psalm xliii. 4;) or, as it is in the original, *בְּיְהוָה חֵמֵשׁ*, "the gladness," or "cream, of my joy." Can we delight

\* *Implet Spiritus Sanctus organum suum, et tanquam fila chordarum tangit digitus Dei corda sanctorum.*—PROSPER. "The Holy Spirit fills his own instrument with his breath, and the finger of God plays upon the hearts of the saints as on the chords of a lyre."—EDIT. † *Credo, Domine, languiddā fide; tamen credo.*—CRUCIGER. "Lord, I do believe, though my faith is weak."—EDIT. ‡ *Ουδενος λογον ποιουμαι των δευρων, ουδε εχω την ψυχην τιμιαν, ως αγαπων αυτην μαλλον η τον Κυριον.*—IGNATIUS *Epist. ad Tarsenses.* "I make no mention of my sufferings, neither do I prize my life highly, as if I loved it more than I love the Lord."—EDIT. § *Hæ sunt piorum delicia, Deo pacato frui.* "These are the delights of the pious,—to enjoy a reconciled God."—EDIT.

in God when other delights are gone? Hab. iii. 17, 18: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom," &c., "yet I will rejoice in the Lord." When the flowers in a man's garden die, yet he can delight in his land and money: thus a gracious soul, when the creature fades, can rejoice in "the pearl of price." Paulinus, when they told him the Goths had sacked Nola, and plundered him of all, lifting-up his eyes to heaven, said, "Lord, thou knowest where I have laid-up my treasure."\* By this delighting in God we may undoubtedly know he is our reward.

QUESTION. "What shall we do to get God to be our reward?"

DIRECTION I. *Let us see our need of God.*—We are undone without him. Lift not up the crest of pride. Beware of the Laodicean temper: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and have need of nothing." (Rev. iii. 17.) God will never bestow himself on them that see no want of him.

DIRECT. II. *Let us beg of God to be our reward.*—It was Austin's prayer, "Lord, give me thyself." † "O do not put me off with common mercies; give me not my 'portion in this life.' (Psalm xvii. 14.) Make-over thyself by a deed of gift to me." Be earnest suitors, and God cannot find in his heart to deny you. Prayer is the key of heaven, which, being turned by the hand of faith, opens all God's treasures.

BRANCH 3. *Live every day in the contemplation of this reward.* ‡ —Be in the altitudes. Think what God hath "prepared for them that love him!" O that our thoughts could ascend! The higher the bird flies, the sweeter it sings. Let us think how blessed they are, who are possessed of their heritage. If one could but look a while through the chinks of heaven-door, and see the beauty and bliss of Paradise; if he could but lay his ear to heaven, and hear the ravishing music of those seraphic spirits, and the anthems of praise which they sing; how would his soul be exhilarated and transported with joy!

O Christians, meditate of this reward! Slight, transient thoughts do no good: they are like breath upon steel, which is presently off again. But let your thoughts dwell upon glory, till your hearts are deeply affected: "What, Lord! is there such an incomprehensible reward to be bestowed upon me? Shall these eyes of mine be blessed with transforming sights of thee? O the love of God to sinners!" Stand at this fire of meditation, till your hearts begin to be warm. How would the reflection on this immense reward conquer temptation, and behead those unruly lusts that have formerly conspired against us! "What! is there a reward so sure, so sweet, so speedy? and shall I by sin forfeit this? Shall I, to please my appetite, lose my crown? O all ye pleasures of sin, begone; let me no more be deceived with your

\* *Domine, ubi sunt omnia mea tu scis.*

† *Da mihi te, Domine.*—AUGUSTINUS.

‡ *Nihil in hac vitâ dulcius sentitur, nil ita mentem ab amore mundi separat, nil sic animam contra tentationes roborat, nil hominem ita ad omne bonum opus excitat, quàm gratia contemplationis.*—BERNARDUS. "In this life there is no feeling so sweet, nothing separates us so much from the love of the world, nothing strengthens the soul so greatly against temptations, nothing so excites a man to every good work,—as the grace of contemplation."—EDIT.

sugared lies, wound me no more with your silver darts. Though 'stolen waters are sweet,' yet the water of life is sweeter." No stronger antidote to expel sin, than the fore-thoughts of the heavenly remunerations. It was when Moses was long out of sight, that Israel made an idol to worship: (Exod. xxxii. 1:) so, when the future reward is long out of our mind, then we set up some idol-lust in our hearts which we begin to worship.

BRANCH 4. This may content God's people: though they have but little oil in the cruse, and their estates are almost boiled away to nothing, *their great reward is yet to come.*—Though your pension be but small, your portion is large. If God be yours by deed of gift, this may rock your hearts quiet. God lets the wicked have their pay beforehand: "Ye have received your consolation." (Luke vi. 24.) A wicked man may make his acquittance, and write, "Received in full payment." But the saints' reward is in reversion; the robe and the ring is yet to come. May not *this* tune their hearts into contentment? Christian! what, though God denies thee a kid to make merry? if he will say, "Son, all [that] I have is thine," (Luke xv. 31,) is not this sufficient? Why dost thou complain of the world's emptiness, who hast God's fulness? Is not God reward enough? \* Hath a son any cause to complain that his father denies him a flower in the garden, when he makes him heir to his estate? The philosopher comforted himself with this, that though he had no music or vine-trees, yet he had the household gods with him.† So, Christian, though thou hast not much of the world, yet thou hast God; and he is an inexhaustible treasure. It was strange, after God had told Abraham, "I am thy exceeding great reward," yet that Abraham should say, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" (Gen. xv. 2.) Shall Abraham ask, "Lord, what wilt thou give me?" when he had given himself? Was Abraham troubled at the want of a child, who had a God? Was not God "better than ten sons?" "Who should be content, if not he who hath God for his portion," and heaven for his haven? †

Let this "exceeding great reward" stir up in us a spirit of activity for God. Our head should study for him, our hands work for him, our feet run in the way of his commandments. Alas! how little is all [that] we can do! "Our work bears no proportion with our reward." *Mercedi an tantæ par labor esse potest?* § The thoughts of this reward should make us rise off the bed of sloth, and act with all our might for God; || it should add wings to our prayers, and weight to our alms. A slothful person stands in the world for a cipher: and God writes down no ciphers in the book of life. Let us "abound in the work of the Lord." (1 Cor. xv. 58.) As aromatic trees sweat out their precious oils, so should we sweat out our strength and spirits for Christ. St. Paul, knowing what a splendid reward was behind,

\* *Quid ultra querit cui omnia suus conditor fit?*—PROSPER. "What else does he seek, to whom his Maker is become all things?"—EDIT. † *Εὐθα καὶ οἱ θεοὶ εἰσι.* "Here also are the gods."—EDIT. ‡ *Quid homini sufficit, cui ipse Conditor non sufficit?*—AUGUSTINUS. § VERINUS. || *Spes præmii solatium fit laboris.*—HIERONYMUS. "The hope of reward sweetens labour."—EDIT.

brought all the glory he could to God: "I laboured," *περισσοτερον*, "more abundantly than they all." (1 Cor. xv. 10.) He outwrought all the other apostles. St. Paul's obedience did not move slow as the sun on the dial, but swift as the sun in the firmament.\* Did Plato and Demosthenes undergo such Herculean labours and studies, who had but the dim watch-light of nature to see by, and did but fancy the pleasures of the Elysian fields after this life? and shall not Christians much more put forth all their vigour of spirit for God, when they are sure to be crowned, nay, God himself will be their crown?

BRANCH 5. If God be so great a reward, *let such as have an interest in him be cheerful*.—God loves a sanguine complexion: cheerfulness credits religion: † *Ευθυμια* causeth *εὐεξία*. "The goodness of the conscience" is seen in "the gladness of the countenance." Let the birds of Paradise sing for joy. Shall a carnal man rejoice, whose hopes lean on earthly crutches? and shall not he rejoice whose treasure is laid up in heaven? Be serious, yet cheerful: a dejected, melancholy temper, as it unfits for duty, especially praising God, so it disparageth heaven. Will others think God is such a great reward, when they see Christians hang the wing, and go drooping in religion? It is a sin as well not to rejoice, as not to repent.

OBJECTION. "But how can I be cheerful? I am reduced to great straits."

ANSWER. Let God take away what he will from thee, he will at last give thee that which is better. As Pharaoh said, "Regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours;" (Gen. xlv. 20;) so I say, "Regard not your stuff;" be not too much troubled at the diminution of these earthly things; "for the good of all the land of" heaven "is yours." In the fields of Sicily there is a continual spring, and flowers all the year long: an emblem of the Jerusalem above, where are flowers of joy always growing. There you shall tread upon stars, be fellow-commoners with angels, and have communion with the blessed Trinity. Let the saints, then, be glad in the Lord; in God are treasures that can never be emptied, and pleasures that can never be ended.

BRANCH 6. If God be an exceeding great reward, *let such as have hope in him long for possession*.—Though it should not be irksome to us to stay here to do service, yet we should have an *αποκαραδοκιαν*, a holy "longing" till the portion comes into our hand. This is a temper becoming a Christian,—*content to live, desirous to die*. (Phil. i. 23—25.) Doth not the bride desire the day of espousals? ‡ (Rev. xxii. 17.) Did we but seriously consider our condition here,—we are compassed with a body of sin; we cannot pray without wandering; we cannot believe without doubting—should not this make us desire

\* *Ὡς ἀσώματος πόνων και κινδύων καταφρονει*.—CHRYSOSTOMUS. "He despises toils and dangers, as though he were incorporeal."—EDIT. † *Acceptior est Deo grata lætitia quàm querula tristitia*.—BUCHOLCERUS. "Grateful joy is much more pleasing to God than querulous sadness."—EDIT. ‡ *Veni, Domine Jesu, ut ad te veniam; veni, dulcedo mea; emancipato animam hanc, ut te Marito suo fruatur*.—ROLLOCCUS. "Come, Lord Jesus, that I may come to thee! Come, O my delight! Emancipate this soul, that she may enjoy thee, her Divine Husband."—EDIT.

to have our pass, to be gone? Let us think how happy those saints above are, who are solacing themselves in God: while we live far from court, they always behold the smiling face of God;\* while we drink wormwood, they swim in honey; while we are perplexed between hope and fear, they know their names are enrolled in the book of life; while we are tossed upon the unquiet waves, they are gotten to the haven. Did we but know what a reward God is, and what "the joy of our Lord" means, we should need patience to be content to stay here any longer.

BRANCH 7. Let such as have God for their exceeding great reward, be living organs of God's praise.—Psalm cxviii. 28: "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee." Themistocles thought he was well requited by the Grecians for his valour, when they took such notice of him in the Olympics, saying, "This is Themistocles." God counts it requital enough for all his love, when we are grateful, and present him with our thank-offering:† and well may we stand upon Mount Gerizim, blessing and praising, if we consider the greatness of this reward. That we should be made heirs of God; and that this surpassing reward is not a debt, but a legacy; and that, when many are passed by, the lot of free grace should fall upon us; let this make us ascribe praise unto the Lord. It is called "the garment of praise:" (Isai. lxi. 3:) the saints never look so comely as in this garment. Praise is the work of heaven: such as shall have angels' reward, should do angels' work. The word "praise" comes from a Hebrew *radix*,  $\text{רָדַף}$ , that signifies "to shoot up:" the godly should send up their praises as a volley of shot toward heaven. Shall you live with God, and partake of his fulness in glory? Break forth into doxologies and triumphs; long for that time when you shall join in concert with the angels, those choristers of heaven, in sounding forth hallelujahs to the King of glory. Such as are monuments of mercy, should be patterns of thankfulness.

USE III. CONSOLATION.

Will God himself be his people's reward? This may be as bezoar-stone, to revive and comfort them.

1. In case of *losses*.—They have lost their livings and promotions for conscience' sake; but as long as God lives, their reward is not lost. (Heb. x. 34.) "I cannot be poor," saith Bernard, "as long as God is rich; for his riches are mine." *Habet omnia qui habet habentem omnia.*‡ Whatever we lose for God, we shall find again in him. "We have left all," say the disciples, "and have followed thee." (Mark x. 28.) Alas! what had they left? A few sorry boats and tackling! What were these to their reward? They parted with

\* *In visione Dei ut primi Veri, et amore Dei ut summi Boni, consistit corona.*—AUGUSTINUS. "The saints' crown of reward consists in seeing God as the first Truth, and in loving God as the highest Good."—EDIT. † *Gratius agere possumus, referre non possumus.*—AUGUSTINUS. "We can return thanks to God, but not favours."—EDIT. ‡ "He who enjoys the Great Proprietor of all things, possesses an ample sufficiency."—EDIT.

movable goods for the unchangeable God. All losses are made up in him : we may be losers *for* God, we shall not be losers *by* him.

2. It is comfort in case of *persecution*.—The saints' reward will abundantly compensate all their sufferings. Agrippa being laid in chains for Caius, [the latter,] when he came after to the empire, released Agrippa out of prison, and gave him a chain of gold bigger than his iron chain. So God will infinitely remunerate them that suffer for him ; for their "waters of Marah," they shall have the wine of Paradise. The saints' sufferings are but *ολιγον*, "for a while ;" (1 Peter v. 10 ;) their reward is for ever : they are *but a while* in the wine-press, *ever* in the banqueting-house. The Hebrew word for "glory," *קבוד* signifies "a weight ;" the *weight* of glory should make affliction light : the enjoying of God eternally, will cause Christians to forget all their sorrows.\* One beam of the Sun of Righteousness will dry up their tears : after trouble, peace ; after labour, rest. Then God will be "all in all" to his people : (1 Cor. xv. 28 :) light to their eye, manna to their taste, music to their ear, joy to their heart. O, then, let the saints be comforted in the midst of their trials ! "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. viii. 18.)

#### USE IV. TERROR TO THE WICKED.

Here is a Gorgon's head to affright them. They shall have a reward, but vastly different from the godly : the one shall be rewarded *εν τη βασιλικη*, ["in the King's palace,"] the other *εν τη φυλακη* ["in prison"]. All the plagues in the Bible are their reward : "Destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity." (Prov. x. 29.) God is their rewarder, but not their reward : "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi. 23.) They who did the devil's work, will tremble to receive their wages.

Zophar doth notably set forth a wicked man's reward : Job xx. 7 : "He shall perish for ever like his own dung : " that is, He shall perish with disgrace ; he shall leave a stinking savour behind. Verse 16 : "He shall suck the poison of asps : " that is, The sin which was sweet as honey in his mouth, shall be bitter as the gall of asps. Verse 26 : "A fire not blown shall consume him : " that is, either *ignis a caelo delapsus*, † "A fire falling from heaven" shall consume him, as it did Korah ; or [by] "a fire not blown" may be meant, A fire casually happening among his goods and chattels shall consume him ; or, "a fire not blown," that is, The fire of hell, not blown with bellows, shall torture his soul ; he shall be ever consuming, never consumed. ‡ Verse 29 : "This is the portion of a wicked man : " and how tremendous is this ! For every golden sand of mercy that runs out to a sinner, God puts a drop of wrath into his vial.

\* *Ο εμπορος φερει τα κυματα. Ινα εδρη τα χρηματα*.—CHRYSOSTOMUS. "The merchant bears the buffets of the waves, in order to acquire riches."—EDIT. † MERCERUS. ‡ *Sic morientur damnati ut semper vivant*.—BERNARDUS. "The damned shall so die as to be always alive."—EDIT.