

Sermon 1

Sermon 2

Sermon 3

A BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGE AT DEATH.

PHIL. i. 21. *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

SAINT Paul was a great admirer of Christ, he desired to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 2. No julep to the blood of Christ; and in the text, 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'

First, *To me to live is Christ.* We must understand Paul of a spiritual life. *To me to live is Christ*, i. e. Christ is my life; so Greg. Nyssen. Or thus, my life is made up of Christ; as a wicked man's life is made up of sin; so Paul's life was made up of Christ, he was full of Christ. But, that I may give you the sense of the text more fully, take it in these three particulars;

1. Christ is the principle of my life.

2. Christ is the end of my life.

3. Christ is the joy of my life.

1. *To me to live is Christ*, i. e. Christ is the principle of my life. I fetch my spiritual life from Christ, as the branch fetcheth its sap from the root, Gal. ii. 20. 'Christ liveth in me.' Jesus Christ is an head of influence; he sends forth life and spirits into me, to quicken me to every holy action. Thus, *To me to live is Christ*; Christ is the principle of my life: from his fulness I live, as the vine branch lives from the root.—

2. *To me to live is Christ*, i. e. Christ is the end of my life; I live not to myself but to Christ. So Grotius and Caufabon, *Christo servio*, "To me to live is Christ," all my living is to do service to Christ, Rom. xiv. 8. 'Whether we live, we live unto the Lord.' When we lay out ourselves wholly for Christ; as the factor trades for the merchant, so we trade for Christ's interest, we propagate his gospel; the design of our life is to exalt Christ, and make the crown upon his head flourish. Now, it may be said, *To us to live is Christ*, our whole life is a living to Christ.

3. *To me to live is Christ*, i. e. Christ is the joy of my life, Psal. xlii. 4. 'God my exceeding joy,' or the cream of my joy. A Christian rejoiceth in Christ's righteousness; he can rejoice in Christ, when worldly joys are gone: when the tulip in a garden withers, a man rejoiceth in his jewels; when relations die, a saint can rejoice in Christ the pearl of price. In this sense, *To me to live is Christ*, he is the joy of my life; if Christ were gone, my life would be a death to me.

Uſe. It should exhort us all to labour to say as the Apostle, *To me to live is Christ.* Christ is the principle of my life, the end of my life, the joy of my life, *To me to live is Christ*: and then we may comfortably conclude, that to die shall be gain.

Secondly, And that brings me to the second part of the text, 'And to die is gain.'

Doct. To a believer death is great gain. A faint can tell what his losses for Christ are, but he cannot tell how great his gains are at death; 'To me to die is gain.' Death to a believer, is *crepusculum gloriæ*, the day-break of eternal brightness. To shew fully what a believer's gains are at death, were a task too great for an angel; all hyperboles fall short, the reward of glory exceeds our very faith; only let me give you some dark views and imperfect lineaments of that infinite glory the faints shall gain at the hour of death; 'To me to die is gain.'

1. Believers at death shall gain a writ of ease from all sins and troubles; they shall be in a state of impeccability; sin expires with their life. I think sometimes what an happy state that will be, never to have a sinful thought more: and they shall have a *quietus est* from their troubles. Here David cried out, 'My life is spent with griefs, and my years with sighing,' Psa. xxxi. 10. *Quid est diu vivere nisi diu torqueri*, Aug. Life begins with a cry, and ends with a groan; but at death all troubles die.

2. Believers at death shall gain the glorious sight of God. They shall see him; *First*, Intellectually with the eyes of their mind, which Divines call the beatifical vision; if there were not such an intellectual sight of God, how do the spirits of just men, made perfect, see him? *Secondly*, They shall behold the glorified body of Jesus Christ; and if it be pleasant to behold the sun, then how blessed a sight will it be to see Christ the Sun of righteousness clothed with our human nature, shining in glory above the angels? Through Christ's flesh, as through a transparent glass, some bright rays and beams of the Godhead shall display themselves to glorified eyes: the sight of God through Christ will be very complacential and delightful; the terror of God's essence will be taken away; God's majesty will be mixed with beauty, and sweetened with clemency; it will be infinitely delightful to the faints to see the amiable aspects and smiles of God's face. Which brings me to the third thing.

3. The faints at death shall not only have a sight of God, but shall enjoy the love of God; there shall be no more a vail on God's face, nor his smiles chequered with frowns, but God's love shall discover itself in all its orient beauty and fragrant sweetness. Here the faints pray for God's love, and they have a few drops; but there they shall have as much as their vessel can receive. To know this love that passeth knowledge, this will cause a jubilation of spirit, and create such holy raptures of joy in the faints, as are superlative, and would soon overwhelm them, if God did not make them able to bear.

4. Believers at death shall gain a celestial palace, an house not made with hands, 2. Cor. v. 1. Here the faints are straitened for room, they have but mean cottages to live in ; but they shall have a royal palace to live in : here is but there sojourning house, there in heaven is there mansion-house, an house built high above all the visible orbs, an house bespangled with light, Col. i. 12. enriched with pearls and precious stones, Rev. xxi. 19. And this is not their landlord's house, but their father's house, John xiv. 2. and this house stands all upon consecrated ground ; it is set out by transparent glass, to shew the holiness of it, Rev. xxi. 27.

5. Believers at death shall gain the sweet society of glorified faints and angels ; this will add something to the felicity of heaven, as every star adds some lustre to the firmament. *First*, The society of the glorified faints ; we shall see them in their souls, as well as in their bodies : their bodies shall be so clear and bright, that we shall see their souls shining through their bodies, as the wine through the glass ; and believers at death shall have converse with the faints glorified. And how delightful will that be, when they shall be freed from all their sinful corruptions, pride, envy, passion, censoriousness, which are scars upon them here to disfigure them ? in heaven there shall be perfect love among the faints ; they shall, as the olive and myrtle, sweetly embrace each other ; the faints shall know one another (as Luther speaks). If in the transfiguration Peter knew Moses and Elias, which he never saw before, Matth. xvii. 3. then much more, in the glorified state, the faints shall perfectly know one another, though they never saw them before. *Secondly*, The faints at death shall behold the angels with the glorified eye of their understanding. The wings of the cherubims (representing the angels) were made of fine gold, to denote both their sanctity and splendor ; the angels are compared to lightning, Mat. xxviii. 3. because of those sparkling beams of majesty, which as lightning shoot from them. And when faints and angels shall meet and sing together in concert in the heavenly choir, what divine harmony, what joyful triumphs will it create ?

6. Believers at death shall gain perfection of holiness. Here grace was but *in cunabulis* in its cradle, very imperfect ; we cannot write a copy of holiness without blotting ; believers are said to receive but *primitias Spiritus*, the first fruits of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 23. But at death the faints shall arrive at perfection, their knowledge clear, their sanctity perfect ; their sun shall be in its full meridian splendor. They need not then pray for increase of grace ; they shall love God as much as they would love him, and as much as he desires to have them love him : they shall be then, in respect of holiness, as the angels of God.

7. At death, the faints shall gain a royal magnificent feast.

I told you before what a glorious palace they shall have ; but a man may starve in a house, if there be no cheer. The saints at death shall have a royal banquet, shadowed out in scripture by a marriage-supper, Rev. xix. 9. Bullinger and Gregory the great understand, by that marriage-supper of the lamb, the stately, magnificent festival the saints shall have in heaven ; they shall feed on the tree of life, Rev. xxii. They shall have the heavenly nectar and ambrosia, ' the spiced wine, and the juice of the pomegranate, Cant. viii. 2. This royal supper of the Lamb will not only satisfy hunger but prevent it, Rev. vii. 16. ' They shall hunger no more.' Nor can there be any surfeit at this feast, because a fresh course will be continually serving in : new and fresh delights will spring from God ; therefore the tree of life in paradise is said to bear twelve sorts of fruit, Rev. xxii. 2.

8. Believers at death shall gain honour and dignity, they shall reign as kings ; therefore we read of the ensigns of their royalty, their white robes and crowns celestial, 1 Tim. iv. 7. We read that the doors of the holy of holies were made of palm-trees and open flowers, covered with gold, 1 Kings vi. 35. An emblem of that victory and triumph, and that golden garland of honour wherewith God hath invested the saints glorified. When all worldly honour shall lie in the dust, the mace, the star, the robe of ermine, the imperial diadem, then shall the saints' honour remain ; not one jewel shall be plucked out of their crown ; they shall gain at death a blessed eternity. If the saints could have the least suspicion or fear of losing their glory, it would much cool and embitter their joy ; but their crown fades not away, 1 Pet. v. 4. As the wicked have a worm that never dies, so the elect have a crown that never fades. Ever, is a short word, but hath no ending : *In fine erit gaudium sine fine*, Bern. 2 Cor. iv. 18. ' The things which are not seen are eternal.' Psal. xvi. 11. ' At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' Who can span eternity ? millions of ages stand but for cyphers in eternity. This is the *etah*, or highest strain of the saint's glory ; ever in Christ's bosom.

Q. *How come the saints to have all this gain ?*

Ans. Believers have a right to all this gain at death, upon divers accounts : by virtue of the Father's donation, the Son's purchase, the Holy Ghost's earnest, and faith's acceptance. Therefore the state of future glory is called the saints' proper inheritance, Col. i. 12. They are heirs of God, and have a right to inherit.

Use 1. See the great difference between the death of the godly and the wicked ; the godly are gainers at death, the wicked are great losers at death. They lose four things :

(1.) They lose the world ; and that is a great loss to the

wicked: they laid up their treasure upon earth; and to be turned out of it all at once, is a great loss.

(2.) They lose their souls, Matth. xvi. 26, 27. The soul was at first a noble piece of coin, which God stamped his own image upon: this celestial spark is more precious than the whole globe of the world; but the sinner's soul is lost; not that the souls of the wicked are annihilated at death, but damned.

(3.) They lose heaven. Heaven is *sedes beatorum*, the royal seat of the blessed; it is the region of happiness, the map of perfection. There is that manna which is angels food; there is the garden of spices, the bed of perfumes, the river of pleasure. Sinners, at death, lose all this.

(4.) They lose their hopes; for though they lived wickedly, yet they hoped God was merciful, and they hoped they should go to heaven. Their hope was not an anchor, but a spider's web. Now, at death, they lose their hopes, they see they did but flatter themselves into hell, Job viii. 14. 'Whose hope shall be cut off.' That is sad, to have a man's life and his hope cut off together.

Ujè 2. If the saints gain such glorious things at death; then how may they desire death? doth not every one desire preferment? *Nemo ante funera felix.* Faith gives a title to heaven, death a possession. Though we should be desirous of doing service here, yet we should be ambitious of being with Christ, Phil. i. 23. We should be content to live, but willing to die. Is it not a blessed thing to be freed from sin, and to lie for ever in the bosom of divine love? is it not a blessed thing to meet our godly relations in heaven, and to be singing divine anthems of praise among the angels? doth not the bride desire the marriage-day, especially if she were to be matched unto the crown? what is the place we now live in, but a place of banishment from God? we are in a wilderness, while the angels live at court. Here we are combating with Satan, and should not we desire to be out of the bloody field, where the bullets of temptation fly so fast, and to receive a victorious crown? think what it will be to have always a smiling aspect from Christ's face; to be brought into the banqueting-house, and have the banner of his love displayed over you. O ye saints, desire death, it is your ascension-day to heaven. *Egredere anima Egredere*, said Hilarion on his death-bed; "Go forth, my soul, what fearest thou?" Another holy man said, "Lord, lead me to that glory which I have seen as through a glass; haste, Lord, and do not tarry." Some plants thrive best when they are transplanted: believers, when they are by death transplanted, cannot choose but thrive, because they have Christ's sweet sun-beams shining upon them: and what though the passage through the valley of the shadow of

death be troublesome? who would not be willing to pass a tempestuous sea, if he were sure to be crowned so soon as he came to shore.

Use 3. Comfort in the loss of our dear and pious relations. They, when they die, are not only taken away from the evil to come, but they are great gainers by death; they leave a wilderness, and go to a paradise; they change their complaints into thanksgivings; they leave their sorrows behind, and enter into the joy of their Lord: why should we weep for their preferment? believers have not their portion paid till the day of their death: God's promise is his bond to make over heaven in reversion to them; but though they have his bond, they do not receive their portion till the day of death. Oh! rejoice to think of their happiness who die in the Lord; to them 'to die is gain:' they are as rich as heaven can make them.

A BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGE AT DEATH.

PHIL. i. 21. *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

HOPE is a Christian's anchor, which he casts within the veil, Rom. xii. 12. 'Rejoicing in hope.' A Christian's hope is not in this life, but he 'hath hope in his death,' Prov. xiv. 32. The best of a saint's comfort begins when his life ends: the wicked have all their heaven here, Luke vi. 28. 'Wo unto you, rich, you have received your consolation.' You may make your acquittance, and write "Received in full payment:" Luke xvi. 25. 'Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things.' But a saint's happiness is in reversion; 'The righteous hath hope in his death.' God keeps the best wine till last. If Cato the heathen said, "To me to die is gain: he saw mortality to be a mercy:" then, what may a believer say? Eccl. vii. 1. 'The day of death is better than the day of one's birth.' *Nemo ante funera felix*, Solon. A queen of this land said, she preferred her coffin before her cradle.

Q. 1. *What benefits do believers receive at death?*

Ans. 1. They have great immunities. 2. They pass immediately into a state of glory. 3. Their bodies are united to Christ in the grave till the resurrection.

1. The saints, at death, have great immunities and freedoms. An apprentice, when out of his time, is made free: when the saints are out of their time of living, then they are made free; not made free till death. 1. At death they are freed from a body of sin. There are in the best *reliquiæ peccati*: some remainders

and reliques of corruption, Rom. vii. 24. 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!' By the body of death is meant the *congeries*, the mass and lump of sin. It may well be called a body for its weightiness, and a body of death for its noisomeness. (1.) It weighs us down; sin hinders us from doing good. A Christian is like a bird that would be flying up, but hath a string tied to its legs to hinder it; so he would be flying up to heaven with the wings of desire, but sin hinders him, Rom. vii. 15. 'The good that I would, I do not.' A Christian is like a ship that is under sail, and at anchor; grace would sail forward, but sin is the anchor that holds it back. (2.) Sin is more active in its sphere than grace: how stirring was lust in David, when his grace lay dormant? (3.) Sin sometimes gets the mastery, and leads a faint captive, Rom. vii. 19. 'The evil that I would not, that I do.' Paul was like a man carried down the stream, and could not bear up against it. How oft is a child of God overpowered with pride and passion? Therefore Paul calls sin, a law in his members, Rom. vii. 24. it binds as a law; it hath a kind of jurisdiction over the soul, as Cæsar had over the senate. (4.) Sin defiles the soul, it is like a stain to beauty, it turns the soul's azure brightness into sable. (5.) Sin debilitates us, it disarms us of our strength, 2 Sam. iii. 39. 'I am this day weak, though anointed king:' so, though a faint be crowned with grace, yet he is weak, though anointed a spiritual king. (6.) Sin is ever restless, Gal. v. 17. 'The flesh lusts against the spirit.' It is an inmate that is always quarreling; like Marcellus, that Roman captain, of whom Hannibal said, whether he did beat, or was beaten, he would never be quiet. (7.) Sin adheres to us, we cannot get rid of it; it may be compared to a wild fig-tree growing on a wall; though the roots are pulled up, yet there are some fibres, some firings of it in the joints of the stone-work, which cannot be gotten out. (8.) Sin mingles with our duties and graces; we cannot write a copy of holiness without blotting. This makes a child of God weary of his life, and makes him water his couch with his tears, to think sin so strong a party, and he should often offend that God whom he loves; this made Paul cry out, *Miser ego homo!* O wretched man that I am! Hence Paul did not cry out of his affliction, of his prison-chain, but of the body of sin. Now a believer at death shall be freed from sin: he is not taken away in, but from his sins; he shall never have a vain, proud thought more; he shall never grieve the Spirit of God any more: sin brought death into the world; and death shall carry sin out of the world. The Persians had a certain day in the year in which they killed all serpents and venomous creatures; such a day will the day of death be to a believer: it will destroy all his sins, which, like so many serpents,

have stung him. Death smites a believer, as the angel did Peter, he made his chains fall off: so death makes all the chains of sin fall off, Acts xii. 7. Believers at death are made perfect in holiness, Heb. xii. 23. 'The spirits of just men made perfect.' At death the souls of believers recover their virgin-purity: O what a blessed privilege is this, to be *sine macula et ruga*, without spot or wrinkle! Eph. v. 27. to be purer than the sun-beams, to be as free from sin as the angels. This makes a believer so desirous to have his pass to be gone; he would fain live in that pure air, where no black vapours of sin arise.

2. At death the saints shall be freed from all the troubles and incumbrances to which this life is subject. "Sin is the seed sown, and trouble is the harvest reaped," *Eurip.* life and trouble are married together; there is more in life to wean us than to tempt us. Parents divide a portion of sorrow to their children, and yet leave enough for themselves, Job v. 7. 'Man is born to trouble,' he is heir to it, it is his birth-right, you may as well separate weight from lead, as trouble from the life of man. *Quid est diu vivere, nisi diu torqueri?* Aug. King Henry's emblem, a crown hung in a bush of thorns: there is a far greater proportion of bitterness than pleasure in this life, Prov. vii. 17. 'I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.' For one sweet ingredient there were two bitter; for the cinnamon, there were myrrh and aloes. A man's grace will not exempt him from troubles, Gen. xlvii. 9. 'Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.' Though he was a godly patriarch, though he had met with God, Gen. xxxii. 30. He named 'the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face:' yet he had his troubles; 'Few and evil,' &c. There are many things to imbitter life and cause trouble, and death frees us from all. 1. *Care.* The mind is full of perplexed thoughts, how to bring about such a design: how to prevent such an evil: the Greek word for care, comes from a primitive in the Greek, that signifies *To cut the heart in pieces.* Care doth disquiet the mind, waste the spirits: no such bitter bread as the bread of carefulness, Ezek. xii. 19. Care is a spiritual canker, which eats out the comfort of life: death is the cure of care. 2. *Fear.* Fear is the ague of the soul, which sets it a shaking, 1 John iv. 14. 'There is torment in fear.' Fear is like Prometheus' vulture, it gnaws upon the heart. There is a distrustful fear, a fear of want; and a distracting fear, a fear of danger; and a discouraging fear, a fear God doth not love us. These fears leave sad impressions upon the mind; now at death a believer is freed from these torturing fears; he now knows he is passed from death to life, he is as far from fear, as the damned are from hope: the grave buries a Christian's fear. 3. *Labour,* Eccl. i. 18. 'All things are full

of labour.' Some labour in the mine, others among the Muses; God hath made a law, 'In the sweat of thy brows thou shalt eat bread:' but death gives a believer a *quietus est*; it takes him off from his day-labour, Rev. xiv. 13. 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, they rest from their labours.' What needs working, when they have their reward? What needs fighting, when the crown is set on their head? they rest from their labours. 4. *Suffering*: Believers are as a lily among thorns: as the dove among the birds of prey. The wicked have an antipathy against the righteous: and secret hatred will break forth into open violence, Gal. iv. 29. 'He that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.' The dragon is described with seven heads and ten horns, Rev. xii. 3. He plotteth with the one, and pusheth with the other. But at death the godly shall be freed from the molestations of the wicked; they shall never be pestered with these vermin more, Job iii. 17. 'There (viz. in the grave) the wicked cease from troubling.' Death doth to a believer, as Joseph of Arimathea did to Christ, it takes him down from the cross, and gives him a writ of ease: the eagle, that flies high, cannot be stung with the serpent: Death gives the soul the wing of the eagle, that it flies above all these venomous serpents here below. 5. *Temptation*: though Satan be a conquered enemy, yet he is a restless enemy, 1 Pet. v. 8. He walketh about: the devil is always going his diocese, he hath his snares and his darts; one he tempts with riches, another with beauty. It is no small trouble to be continually followed with temptations; it is as bad as for a virgin to have her chastity daily assaulted: but death will free a child of God from temptation, he shall never be vexed more with the old serpent. After death hath shot its dart at us, the devil shall have done shooting his; though grace puts a believer out of the devil's possession, only death frees him from the devil's temptation. 6. *Sorrow*: a cloud of sorrow gathers in the heart, and drops into tears, Psal. xxxi. 10. 'My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing.' It was a curse, Gen. iii. 16. 'In sorrow thou shalt bring forth.' Many things occasion sorrow; sickness, law-suits, treachery of friends, disappointment of hopes, loss of estate, Ruth i. 20. 'Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty.' Sorrow is the evil spirit that haunts us; the world is a *Bochim*, Rachel wept for her children; some grieve that they have no children, and others grieve that their children are undutiful. Thus we spend our years with sighing; it is a valley of tears: but death is the funeral of all our sorrows, Rev. vii. 17. 'And God shall wipe away all tears.' Then Christ's spouse puts off her mourning: how can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, when the bride-groom

shall be with them; Matth. ix. 15. Thus death gives a believer his *quietus est*: it frees him from sin and trouble: though the apostle calls death the last enemy, 1 Cor. xv. 11. yet it is the best friend: 'To me to die is gain.'

Use 1. See here that which may make a true saint willing to die: death will set him out of gun-shot; free him from sin and trouble: there is no cause of weeping, to leave a valley of tears; the world is the stage on which sin and misery are acted. Believers are here in a strange country, why then should they not be willing to go out of it? Death beats off their fetters of sin, and sets them free, who go weeping of a goal: besides our own sins, the sins of others. The world is a place where Satan's feat is; a place where we see God daily dishonoured. Lot (who was a bright star in a dark night) his righteous soul was vexed with the unclean conversation of the wicked, 2 Pet. iii. 7. To see God's sabbaths broken, his truths adulterated, his glory eclipsed, is that which wounds a godly heart: this made David cry out, Psal. cxx. 5. 'Wo is me that I dwell in Meséch, that I sojourn in the tents of Kedar:' Kedar was Arabia, where were Ishmael's posterity; this was a cut to David's heart, to dwell there. O then be willing to depart out of the tents of Kedar.

2. The bodies of believers are united to Christ in the grave, and shall rest there till the resurrection. They are said to sleep in Jesus, 1 Thess. iv. 14. The dust of believers is part of Christ's body mystical. The grave is a dormitory or place of rest to the saints, where their bodies quietly sleep in Christ, till they are awakened out of their sleep by the trumpet of the archangel.

Qu. 2. But how shall we know that we shall gain all this at death, to be freed from sin and trouble, and to have our bodies united to Christ in the grave?

Ans. If we are believers, then we gain all this at death. 'To me, saith Paul, to die is gain:' to me, *quatenus*, a believer. Are we such? Have we this blessed faith? Faith, wherever it is, is operative. Lapidaries say, there is no precious stone but hath *virtutem insitam*, some hidden virtue in it: so I may say of faith, it hath some secret virtue in it: it anchors the soul on Christ: it hath both a justifying and sanctifying virtue in it; it fetcheth blood out of Christ's sides to pardon, and water out of his sides to purge: it works by love; it constrains to duty, it makes the head study for Christ, the tongue confess him, the hands work for him. I have read of a father who had three sons, and, being to die, left in his will all his estate to that son who could find his ring with the jewel which had an healing virtue. The case was brought before the judges; the two elder sons counterfeited a ring, but the younger son brought the true

ring, which was proved by the virtue of it: whereupon his father's estate went to him. To this ring I may compare faith: there is a counterfeit faith in the world; but if we can find this ring of faith which hath the healing virtue in it, to purify the heart, this is the true faith which gives us an interest in Christ, and entitles us to all these privileges at death, to be freed from sin and sorrow, and to have our bodies united to Christ, while they are in the grave.

3. I should now come to the third privilege at death, the souls of believers pass immediately into glory. Where I shall lead you to the top of mount Pisgah, and give you a short view of the glory of heaven.

A BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGE AT DEATH.

PHIL. i. 21. *And to die is gain.*

AT death the souls of believers pass into glory: death brings *malorum omnium ademptionem: omnium ademptionem*: death is the day-break of eternal brightness. And here I shall lead you to the top of mount Pisgah, and give you a glimpse of the holy land.

Q. 1. *What is comprehended in glory?*

Ans. Glory is *status omnium bonorum aggregatione perfectus*, Boetius. It is a perfect state of bliss which consists in the accumulation and heaping together all those good things which immortal souls are capable of. And truly here I am at a loss; all that I can say falls short of the celestial glory. Apelles' pencil cannot delineate it; angels' tongues cannot express it: we shall never understand glory fully, till we are in heaven: only let me give you some dark views, and some imperfect lineaments of that state of glory saints shall arrive at after death.

1. The first and most sublime part of the glory of heaven, is the full and sweet fruition of God: *ipse Deus sufficit ad premium*, Aug. We are apt to think the happiness of heaven is in being free from pain and misery: but the very quintessence of happiness, is the enjoyment and fruition of God; this is the diamond-ring of glory: God is an infinite inexhaustible fountain of joy; and to have him, is to have all. Now the enjoyment of God implies three things.

1. It implies our seeing of God.
2. Our loving of God.
3. God's loving us.

1. The enjoying of God implies our seeing of God, 1 John

iii. 2. 'We shall see him as he is:' Here we see him as he is not: not mutable, mortal; there as he is.

Q. 2. *How shall we see God?*

Ans. 1. We shall see him intellectually, with the eyes of our mind. These divines call the beatifical vision; we shall have a full knowledge of God, though not know him fully. If there were not such an intellectual sight of God, then how do the spirits of just men made perfect see God? This sight of God will be very glorious; as when a king, on his coronation day, shews himself in all his royalty and magnificence.

2. We shall corporally behold the glorified body of Jesus Christ: and if it be a pleasant thing to behold the sun, Eccl. xi. 7. then, how blessed a sight will it be to behold the Sun of righteousness; to see Christ clothed in our human nature, sitting in glory above the angels! Solomon saith, 'the eye is not satisfied with seeing,' Eccl. i. 8. But sure the eyes of saints will be satisfied with seeing that orient brightness which shall shine from the beautiful body of Christ. It must needs be satisfying, because through Christ's flesh some rays and beams of the Godhead shall gloriously display themselves. God's excellent majesty would overwhelm us; but through the veil of Christ's flesh we shall behold the divine glory.

3. Our seeing God will be transforming. We shall so see him, as to be in some measure assimilated and changed into his image, 1 John iii. 2. 'We shall be like him.' If, when Moses was with God on the mount, and had but some imperfect sight of his glory, 'Moses' face shined,' Exod. xxxiv. 33. How shall the saints glorified shine, being always in God's presence, and having some beams of his glory put upon them? 'We shall be like him.' One that is deformed, may look on beauty, and not be made beautiful; but the saints shall so see God, as that sight shall transform them into his likeness, Psal. xvii. 15. 'When I awake I shall be satisfied with thy likeness.' Not that the saints shall partake of God's essence: for as the iron in the fire is made fiery yet remains iron still; so the saints, by beholding God's majesty, shall be made glorious creatures, but yet creatures still.

4. Our seeing of God in heaven will be unweariable. Let a man see the rarest sight that is, he will be soon cloyed; when he comes into a garden, and sees delicious walks, fair arbours, pleasant flowers, within a little while he grows weary; but it is not so in heaven; there is no surfeit, *ibi nec fames nec fastidium*, Bern. The saints will never be weary of their prospect, viz. of seeing God; for, God being infinite, there shall be every moment new and fresh delights springing from God into the souls of the glorified.

II. The second thing implied in our enjoying God, is our loving of God. It is a saint's grief, that his heart is like the frozen ocean that he can melt no more in love to God: but in heaven the saints shall be like seraphims burning in divine love: love is a pleasant affection; 'fear hath a torment in it,' 1 John iv. 18. Love hath joy in it. To love beauty, is delightful: God's amazing beauty will attract the saint's love, and it will be their heaven to love him.

III. The third thing implied in enjoying God, is God's loving us. Were there glory in God, yet if there were not love, it would much eclipse the joys of heaven: but 'God is love,' 1 John iv. 16. The saints glorified cannot love so much as they are loved. What is their love to God's? What is their star to this sun; God doth love his people on earth, when they are black as well as comely: they have their imperfections; O how entirely will he love them, when they are without 'spot, or wrinkle?' Eph. v. 27.

1. This is the felicity of heaven, to be in the sweet embraces of God's love; to be the *Hephzibah*, the delight of the King of glory; to be sunning ourselves in the light of God's countenance. Then the saints shall know that love of Christ which passeth knowledge, Eph. iii. 19. From this glorious manifestation of God's love, will flow infinite joy into the souls of the blessed: therefore heaven is called 'entering into the joy of our Lord,' Mat. xxv. 21. The seeing of God, the loving of God, and being beloved of God, will cause a jubilation of spirit, and create such holy raptures of joy in the saints, as is unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. *In Deo quadam dulcedine delectatur anima, imo rapitur*, Aug. Now the saints spend their years with sighing, they weep over their sins and afflictions; then their water shall be turned into wine, then the vessels of mercy shall be filled and run over with joy; then they shall have their palm-branches and harps in their hand, Rev. xiv. 2. in token of their triumphs and rejoicing.

2. The second thing comprehended in glory, is the good society there. *First*, There are the angels; every star adds to the light, those blessed cherubims will welcome us to paradise. If the angels rejoiced so at the conversion of the elect; how will they rejoice at their coronation! *Secondly*, There is the company of the saints, Heb. xii. 23. 'The spirits of just men made perfect.'

Q. *Whether shall the saints in glory know each other?*

Ans. Certainly they shall; for our knowledge in heaven shall not be diminished but increased. We shall not only know our friends and godly relations, but those glorified saints which we never saw before: it must be so; for society without acquaintance is not comfortable; and of this opinion were St Austin,

Anselm, Luther. And indeed the scripture seems to hint so much to us; for, if Peter in the transfiguration knew Moses and Elias, whom he never saw before, Mat. xvii. 4. then surely in heaven the saints shall know one another, and be infinitely delighted in each other's company.

3. The third thing comprehended in glory, is perfection in holiness. Holiness is the beauty of God and angels, it makes heaven: What is happiness but the quintessence of holiness? Here a Christian's grace is imperfect, he cannot write a copy of holiness without blotting. He is said to receive but *primitias spiritus*, the first-fruits of the spirit, grace in *feri*, Rom. viii. 23. But at death believers shall arrive at perfection of grace: then this sun shall be in its meridian splendor; then they shall not need to pray for increase of grace, for they shall be as the angels; their light shall be clear as well as their joy full.

4. The fourth thing in glory is dignity and honour; they shall reign as kings: therefore the saints glorified are said to have their *insignia regalia*, their ensigns of royalty, their white robes and their crown, 2 Tim. iv. 7. Cæsar, after his victories, in token of honour, had a chair of ivory set for him in the senate, and a throne in the theatre; the saints, having obtained their victories over sin and Satan, shall be enthroned with Christ in the empyrean heaven. To sit with Christ denotes safety; to sit on the throne, dignity, Rev. iii. 21. 'This honour have all the saints.'

5. The fifth thing in glory, is the harmony and union among the heavenly inhabitants. The devil cannot get his cloven foot into heaven; he cannot conjure up any storms of contention there: there shall be perfect union: there Calvin and Luther are agreed; there is no jarring string in the heavenly music; there is nothing to make any difference, no pride or envy there. Though one star may differ from another, one may have a greater degree of glory, yet every vessel shall be full: there shall the saints and angels sit as olive-plants round about their father's table in love and unity. Then shall they join together in concert, then shall the loud anthems of praise be sung in the heavenly choir.

6. The sixth thing in glory, is a blessed rest, Heb. iv. 9. 'There remains a rest.' *Felix transitus a labore ad requiem*. Here we can have no rest, tossed and turned as a ball on racket, 2 Cor. iv. 8. 'We are troubled on every side.' How can a ship rest in a storm? But after death the saints get into their haven. Every thing is quiet in the centre; God is *centrum quietativum animae*, as the schoolmen, "The centre where the soul doth sweetly acquiesce." A Christian, after his weary marches and battles, shall put off his bloody armour, and rest himself upon the bosom of Jesus, that bed of perfume: when

death hath given the faints the wings of a dove, then they shall fly away to paradise and be at rest.

7. The seventh thing in glory, is eternity, 2 Cor. iv. 17. 'An eternal weight of glory.' *1st*, Glory is a weight: the Hebrew word for glory (*quod significat pondus*) is a weight: God must make us able to bear it. *2dly*, An eternal weight. Glory is such a manna as doth not breed worms. If the faints' glory in heaven were but for a time, and they were in fear of losing it, it would eclipse and embitter the joys of heaven; but eternity is written upon their joys. The garland made of flowers of paradise fades not, 1 Pet. v. 4. I have read of a river which they call the day-river, in which time it runs with a full torrent, but at night it is dried up; such are all earthly comforts, they run with a full stream all the day-time of life, but at the night of death they are dried up; but the faints glorified shall drink of the rivers of pleasure for evermore, Plal. xvi. 11. Eternity is the heaven of heavens: *in fine gaudium erit sine fine*, Bern. The joys of heaven as overflowing, so everflowing.

Qu. 2. *When do believers enter upon possession of glory?*

Ans. They pass immediately after death into glory. Some hold, with the Platonists and Lucianists, that the soul dies: but many of the sober heathens believed the soul's immortality. The Romans, when their great men died, caused an eagle to be let loose, and fly about in the air, signifying hereby that the soul was immortal, and did not die with the body. Christ tells us the soul is not capable of killing, Luke xii. 4. therefore not of dying. And as the soul doth not die, so neither doth it sleep in the body for a time: if the soul be at death absent from the body, 2 Cor. v. 8. then it cannot sleep in the body. There is an immediate passage from death to glory, it is but winking, and we shall see God, Luke xxiii. 43. 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' By paradise is meant heaven; the third heaven into which Paul was wrapped (which all hold to be the heaven of the blessed) was called paradise, 2 Cor. xii. 4. Now saith Christ to the thief on the cross, 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' His body could not be there, for it was laid in the grave, but it was spoken of his soul, that it should be immediately after death in heaven. Let none be so vain as to talk of purgatory; a soul purged by Christ's blood, needs no fire of purgatory, but goes immediately from a death-bed into a glorified state.

Uje. 1. See what little cause believers have to fear death, when it brings such glorious benefits; 'to me to die is gain.' Why should the faints fear their preferment? Is it not a blessed thing to see God, to love God, and to lie forever in the bosom of divine love? Is it not a blessed thing to meet our godly relations in heaven? Why should the faints be afraid of their bless-

ings? Is a virgin afraid to be matched into the crown? Now is but the contract, at death is the marriage supper of the Lamb, Rev. xix. 9. What hurt doth death, but takes us from among fiery serpents, and places us among angels? What hurt doth it do, but to clothe us with a robe of immortality? hath he any wrong done, that hath his sackcloth pulled off, and hath cloth of gold put upon him? fear not dying, who cannot live but by dying.

Use. 2. You who are real faints, whose hearts are purified by faith, spend much time in musing upon these glorious benefits which you shall have by Christ at death. Thus might you, by a contemplative life, begin the life of angels here, and be in heaven before your time. Eudoxius was so affected with the glory of the sun, that he thought he was born only to behold it: What should we contemplate but celestial glory, when we shall see God face to face? David was got above the ordinary sort of men, he was in the altitudes, Psal. cxxxix. 18. 'I am ever with thee.' A true faint every day takes a turn in heaven, his thoughts and desires are like cherubims flying up to paradise. Can men of the world so delight in looking upon their bags of gold, and fields of corn, and shall not the heirs of heaven take more delight in contemplating their glory in reversion? Could we send forth faith as a spy, and every day view the glory of the Jerusalem above, how would it rejoice us, as it doth the heir to think of the inheritance which is to come into his hand shortly?

Use 3. Consolation. This is that which may comfort the faints in two cases.

1. Under their wants; they abound only in wants; the measure is almost spent in the barrel: but be patient in death, and you shall have a supply of all your wants; you shall have a kingdom, and be as rich as heaven can make you. He who hath the promise of an estate, after the expiring of a few years, tho' at present he hath nothing to help himself, yet comforts himself with this, that shortly he shall have an estate come into his hand, 1 John ii. 3. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be:' we shall be enamelled with glory, and be as rich as the angels.

2. A true faint is, (as Luther) *Hæres crucis*: but this may make us go cheerfully through our sufferings; there are great things laid up in store: there is glory coming, which eye hath not seen; we shall drink of the fruit of the vine in the kingdom of heaven. Though now we drink in a wormwood cup, yet here is sugar to sweeten it: we shall taste of those joys of paradise which exceed our faith, and may be better felt than they can be expressed.