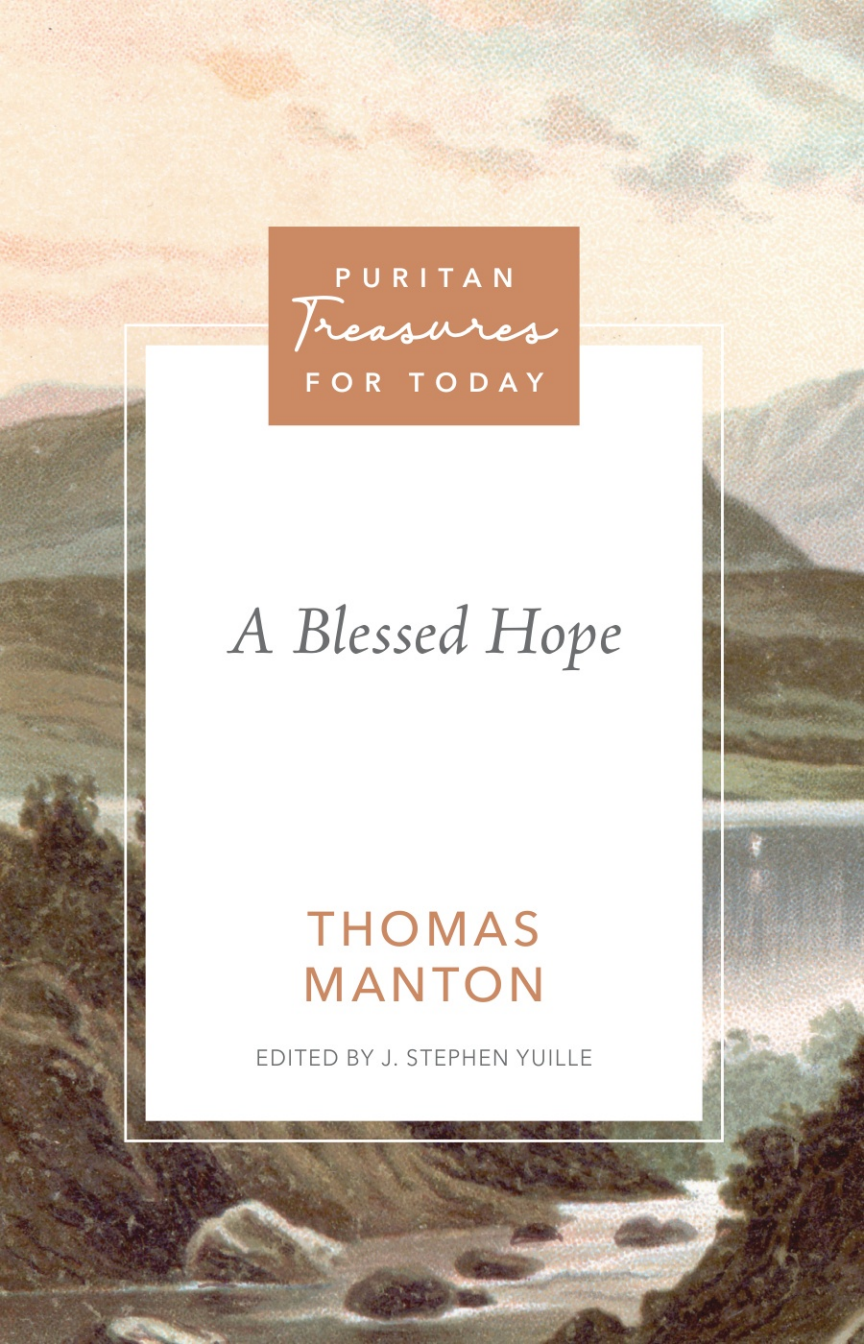




PURITAN
Treasures
FOR TODAY

A Blessed Hope

THOMAS
MANTON

EDITED BY J. STEPHEN YUILLE

How will you keep going if you have nothing to look forward to?

Our path in life is challenging, enclosed in darkness, and often seems hopeless. Thomas Manton experienced this, yet he also knew that God gently motivates His children along the way by giving them something to look forward to. Accordingly, *A Blessed Hope* reminds us that the Christian life is sustained by “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Would you like to better understand what Christian hope is, recognize how it sanctifies us, and learn to maintain it? Then read this book and discover with Manton the pleasant power of expecting the return of Christ and His heavenly reward.

“Like so many of his Puritan peers, Thomas Manton possessed a remarkable ability to extract a great deal of exegetical insight from a passage of Scripture. As a preacher, he focused on applying the truth of Scripture to the heart and affections of his hearers. Perhaps no truth brings greater comfort to the soul of the Christian than that of our blessed hope in Christ Jesus. To that end, this book will edify and encourage all who read!”

Jimmy Funchess, *senior pastor of Flint Groves Baptist Church, Gastonia, North Carolina*

THOMAS MANTON (1620–1677) was a popular Presbyterian preacher, a clerk of the famous Westminster Assembly, and a chaplain to Oliver Cromwell.



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A Blessed Hope

A Blessed Hope

Thomas Manton

Edited & Abridged
by J. Stephen Yuille

Puritan Treasures for Today
Series Editor: J. Stephen Yuille



Reformation Heritage Books
Grand Rapids, Michigan

A Blessed Hope

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Reformation Heritage Books

3070 29th St. SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49512

616-977-0889

orders@heritagebooks.org

www.heritagebooks.org

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Italics in Scripture quotations added by the editor for emphasis.

Printed in the United States of America

26 27 28 29 30/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN: 979-8-88686-249-2

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Preface

A pleasant-looking meadow catches the attention of Christian and Hopeful as they travel toward the Celestial City. Thinking it runs parallel to the path they are traveling, and assuming it will ease their arduous journey, they decide to abandon the narrow way and scramble over the wall. Initially, all is well, and they assure themselves that they have made a sensible decision. But soon the storm clouds gather, the sky darkens, and the rain descends. By morning, they are completely lost and no longer able to find the once familiar path. To make matters worse, they stumble upon Giant Despair who captures them, beats them, and imprisons them in Doubting Castle. After languishing for days in utter despair, the two pilgrims decide to spend the night in prayer. As day breaks, Christian cries with a loud voice, "What a fool am I to lie in a stinking dungeon when I may walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom, called *Promise*, that I

am persuaded will open any lock in Doubting Castle.”¹ Within moments, Christian and Hopeful are unlocking the chains that shackle them and the doors that imprison them. Free of Giant Despair and Doubting Castle, they find their way back to the narrow way.

Few things are as important to the Christian life as hope. At times, the path is challenging, and the darkness closes in all around us. Our knees buckle under the pressure, and our shoulders droop under the weight. We begin to succumb to doubt and despair. At such times, we need to remember that deliverance only comes fully and finally in glory. Until then, we “lay hold of the hope set before us,” for it is “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb. 6:18–19). The hymn writer asks,

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?²

It is a weighty question. “Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?” In large part our ability to answer in the affirmative depends upon the degree to which the following truths resonate within our souls.

First, hope is fueled by the conviction that God is able to do all that He has promised. God told Abraham

1. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress: The First Part* (Barbour Books, 1985), 134.

2. Priscilla Owens, “We Have an Anchor,” stanza 1.

that he would have a son (Gen. 15:4). The apostle Paul notes that Abraham believed God's promise "contrary to hope" (Rom. 4:18). In other words, he considered two undeniable facts: the deadness of his own body and the deadness of Sarah's womb (v. 19). Abraham was a realist in that he knew they were well beyond childbearing age. But Paul also notes that Abraham believed "in hope" (v. 18). In addition to considering his circumstances, he considered his God. "He did not waver" at God's promise, "being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform" (vv. 20–21).

Similarly, as we navigate the storms of life, we need to reflect on our God rather than react to our circumstances. The psalmist declares, "We will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Ps. 20:7). His name strengthens the trembling heart: "He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD" (Ps. 112:7). His name gladdens the grieving heart: "But I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation" (Ps. 13:5). His name calms the troubled heart: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance" (Ps. 42:5). We hope in God because nothing is too difficult for Him. Like Abraham, we are "fully convinced" that He will fulfill every promise according to His matchless power.

Second, hope is rooted in the assurance that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace

with God is not an emotion but a condition. At one time, we were the objects of God's wrath (Eph. 2:1–3), but now we are the recipients of His grace. This peace is attained through Christ's mediatorial work (Rom. 5:1–2, 9–11). Because of Christ, we no longer have any reason to fear the sting of death, the terror of judgment, the torment of hell, or the wrath of God. Christ has swallowed it all. This means that our peace with God is such that He loves us as if we had never been the object of His wrath. As a result, we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2).

So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith He loves the Son:
Such is His love to me!

Why should I ever fretful be
Since such as God is mine?
He watches o'er me night and day
And tells me Mine is thine.³

The magnitude of God's love for us is difficult to take to heart because we tend to measure His love by our circumstances. Did God love Joseph? He spent years in jail. Did God love Naomi? She buried a husband and two sons. Did God love Jonathan? He died on a lonely hill at the edge of a Philistine sword. Did God love David? He spent years fleeing from Saul. Did God love

3. Horatius Bonar, “A Mind at Perfect Peace,” stanzas 4–5.

Paul? He suffered shipwrecks, imprisonments, and beatings. Does God love me? Here is what we must grasp: God's love is not measured by our current circumstances. The greatest promise in all of Scripture is this: "I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:33). This promise is heaven—the very heaven of heavens.⁴ When we come to God through Christ, He becomes ours. His power is ours to protect us, His wisdom is ours to direct us, His mercy is ours to pity us, His grace is ours to pardon us, His joy is ours to satisfy us, and His love is ours to refresh us. On top of all this, He is "our God forever and ever" (Ps. 48:14). He is not our God for a day, week, month, or year, but "forever and ever." He is not our God for a million years, but "forever and ever."

Third, hope is fixed on the glory that will be revealed to us. Paul writes, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed" (Rom. 8:18). Someday we will have all that God has promised: a glorified soul without sin, a glorified body without decay, and a renewed heaven and earth. Far eclipsing these, we will see God in the face of Christ. This sight will be like a torrent of pleasure.

Do we understand that this life is but a prologue to all that is coming? Investments can evaporate, houses can crumble, jobs can disappear, relationships can sour,

4. George Swinnock, *The Blessed and Boundless God* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), 168.

and health can fail. Hope does not run from these realities—no matter how unpleasant. It faces reality while remaining fixed on what will be. It focuses on the return of Christ, the resurrection from the dead, the full and final deliverance from sin, the renovation of the entire cosmos, and the prospect of eternal joy. Hope makes this future certainty a present reality that informs and shapes our values and perspectives. It is immune to every illness, every threat, every grief, every worry, every challenge, and every loss. As the anchor steadies the ship in the midst of the storm, so hope keeps us steady in the storms of life.

“Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?”⁵ When the above three truths converge in the soul, they impart spiritual strength whereby we are able to answer in the affirmative:

We have an anchor that keeps the soul,
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.⁶

What you have in your hand is a splendid account of the believer's hope. It comes from the pulpit of Thomas Manton (1620–1677), who ministered in the city of London during some of the most eventful years in England's history. While preaching a series of sermons on the book of Titus, he probed the depths of Paul's words in

5. Owens, “We Have and Anchor,” stanza 1.

6. Owens, “We Have an Anchor,” refrain.

2:11–14, particularly his declaration that we are “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”⁷ Manton was convinced that the five most enlivening truths in all of Scripture are these: the glory of God, the misery of sin, the beauty of the gospel, the mystery of providence, and the hope of glory.⁸ The present volume is devoted to the fifth of these.

Here is solid work steeped in Scripture, its content clearly organized, skillfully explained, and insightfully applied. And here is a sweet work, addressing as it does one of the most important components of experiential religion—what it is to “lay hold of the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:18). As you read, may you reflect deeply and apply earnestly. May this enlivening truth encourage you to persevere in affliction and triumph over temptation. May it be a sure and steady anchor to your soul. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13).

7. For the original work, see *Sermons upon Titus 2:11–14*, in *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, 22 vols. (London, 1870–75; repr., Solid Ground Christian Books, 2008), 16:172–260.

8. For Thomas Manton’s meditations on the first four truths, see *Holy Meditation* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2025).

Introduction

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

—TITUS 2:11–14

According to these verses, there are two great principles of obedience. The first is gratitude for Christ's death. The second is hope for the glorious reward that is set before us. Therefore, whether we look backward or forward, we encounter obligations to obedience. When we look backward, we see an excellent merit: Christ "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us" (v. 14). When we look forward, we see a glorious hope: "the blessed hope and

glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (v. 13).

The Lord could rule us with a rod of iron, but He is pleased to draw us "with gentle cords, with bands of love" (Hos. 11:4). He is pleased to engage with us and propose rewards. We are bound to serve Him, whether there is any reward or not, but the Lord will not leave us without encouragement. We are inclined to have hard thoughts of God and to think that He is harsh and severe, requiring work without giving wages. But we must consider that we have the highest motive as well as the noblest work. We are not only to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" but to look for "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:12). Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel—the happy enjoyment of God and Christ forever. There is no such encouragement to virtuous living found anywhere else in the world.

Our blessed hope will be accomplished to the full at Christ's "glorious appearing" (v. 13). As often as we think of eternal life, we must also think of Christ's appearing. Many people dream of a heaven without a day of judgment. They desire to sit upon Christ's throne without standing before His tribunal. But true believers look for both the blessed hope and Christ's glorious appearing. Before we enter into glory, we must first give an account.

CHAPTER 1

Looking Implies Patience

What does it mean to look? It means to wait patiently for what God has promised. Patience is a grace that we need in our pilgrimage because we encounter so many difficulties. “For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise” (Heb. 10:36). It takes time for us to bring our hearts to do God’s will. After it is done, we still need patience as we wait for God’s timing in granting the reward. The reward is not given until after many labors and troubles that make time seem very long. We cannot spare patience if we want to persist in well-doing, for we are to wait for the blessed hope. Christ says that the good ground brings forth “fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). Just as the ground endures the plow, the cold, and the frost, so that the seed sprouts in due time, so we need patience to wait upon God for the blessed hope. Patience is necessary in the present life, and it is inseparable from hope. It is called the “patience of hope” (1 Thess. 1:3).

God gives a proper action to every grace. There is the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope. In other words, faith makes us work, love makes us labor, and hope makes us wait patiently for the reward. "But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (Rom. 8:25). We wait with patience for the object of our hope. There is an intervening time between hope and possession, which requires us to exercise patience. We desire the object of our hope, and delays can be troublesome. This makes looking a work of patience.

CHAPTER 2

Looking Implies Hope

Looking also means to hope, which is an actual expectation of the blessedness to come. God “has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace” (2 Thess. 2:16). There is such a thing as blind hope, which is found in ignorant and presumptuous people who do not pay any attention to their actions. Presumption is born out of darkness while hope is born out of light. Presumption is the result of ignorance and thoughtlessness. When people become serious, they find it difficult to hope because human nature tends to be more inclined to fear and sorrow than to joy and hope. However, blind confidence is very common because people do not consider their actions. They simply assume that they will go to heaven without any evidence. Therefore, one of the first things God does through His Word is to dismantle our worldly hopes and make us see that we are lost and condemned. In his presumptuous state, Paul thought that he had as much reason to believe he would go to heaven as any other person. “I was alive once without the

law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died" (Rom. 7:9). When the commandment convicted his heart, he started to become serious and realized that he deserved God's judgment.

The excellence of hope does not lie in the strength of our confidence but in the clarity of our foundation. We read in Matthew 7:24–27 of two builders, one foolish and one wise. There was no difference between the buildings themselves; both structures were equally impressive. The difference lay in the foundation; one was built on sand and the other on rock. Therefore, it is important to focus not only on the strength of our hope but on the evidence, foundation, and justification for it. Do you truly understand what you are doing when you have such strong faith in your salvation? Presumption grows within people without them realizing it. It is not an act of wisdom and deliberation, and therefore it will lead to shame. A person needs to have solid grounds for their hope. True hope is a serious and earnest act that comes from grace and seeks perfection. That is why we are said to be born again to "a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3). Just as seed desires to grow, so too does grace. When it is infused, there is an immediate tendency and motion in that direction.

Others may have confidence, but their false hope will ultimately lead to disappointment and great confusion. The hope of a hypocrite is like a spider's web (Job 8:14). The spider carefully spins her web out of her own

body, but as soon as the broom comes, the spider and her web are swept away and trampled underfoot. The same applies to hypocrites. They weave a fine web out of their own desires. They have a strong hope which they create for themselves. However, when death comes, their hope dies with them. "When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish, and the hope of the unjust perishes" (Prov. 11:7). This statement not only refers to their worldly expectations (greatness, wealth, and success in the world) but to their heavenly hopes. When they face their eternal destiny, they suddenly become aware of their error. We tend to be more aware of what is near than what is far; hence, people become wise as they approach death. Eternity is approaching, and they begin to awaken from their dream, and they lose all their confidence. Though they thought they were full, they realize that they are actually hungry.

The hope of the hypocrite is also compared to death. "But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope—loss of life!" (Job 11:20). When the body is on the verge of dissolution, it experiences intense pain and discomfort. The wicked then say a final goodbye to the body, leaving behind all their hopes, which vanish in an instant. They are filled with horror and despair. Losing all hope in an instant is the greatest evil that can befall a person. Therefore, this pursuit of the blessed hope is not a mere dream.

True hope is not to be confused with mere glances toward heaven. Sometimes even unbelievers experience sober thoughts of heaven that rush into their minds. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!" (Num. 23:10). The apostle speaks of those who had a "taste" (Heb. 6:4), occasionally snatching some savor of the sweetness of heaven and spiritual comforts. Even a worldly person might experience sudden raptures of the soul, but this is not to be confused with "looking for the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). True looking is a constant view of the happiness to come. Sudden motions are not operative. They come and go, leaving no warmth upon the soul. As a sudden light blinds a person rather than show him the way, so these sudden flashes and heavenly thoughts vanish and leave a person no better.

Such a loose hope has no efficacy upon the soul to incline it to the spiritual life. "A double-minded man" is "unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). When a person is double-minded, divided between hopes and fears, there will be much indiscretion and unevenness in his life. He will be on and off with God. As his heart is divided, so too is his care for religion. But the apostle Paul writes, "Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air" (1 Cor. 9:26). Here, he alludes to the Isthmian games. In an ordinary race, if an athlete perceives he will lose, he grows discouraged. He begins to slacken his pace because he has no hope.

But the apostle says, "I run...not with uncertainty." We are sure to obtain the prize. This quickens us and stirs us to holy endeavors. The more certain our hope is, the greater our strength will be, and it will exert more influence upon our life.

CHAPTER 3

A Lively Hope

The expectation of blessedness is an earnest and lively hope, and it reveals itself in three things: serious thoughts, earnest groans, and lively tastes. We review each in turn.

Serious Thoughts

Frequent and focused thoughts act as a messenger, providing the soul with glimpses of what is to come. When people hope for something, their minds naturally fix on it and contemplate it. This is evident in earthly matters. Hope motivates action and causes us to anticipate and savor the fulfillment of our expectations. Through contemplation, we create a feast for the soul, indulging in thoughts about the happiness we will experience once our desires are realized. Contemplation of heaven becomes a feast for the soul as hope brings forth descriptions of the future as if they were already present. Indeed, wherever our treasure lies, our hearts and thoughts will always follow. Hope lifts the mind above worldly concerns, allowing us to immerse ourselves in the glorious

future that awaits us. We envision Christ on His heavenly throne. As adopted heirs with Christ, we should fix our thoughts on the hope of inheriting the kingdom of heaven.

We should be careful to take note of what occupies the majority of our thoughts. A carnal heart reveals itself through carnal thoughts and worldly schemes—when all our reflections revolve around pursuing material gain. We should consider the man who “thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’” (Luke 12:17). He was engaged in internal dialogues about how to spend his possessions, indicating that his heart was carnal. “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’” (James 4:13). It is common for people to live off the hope of future gains and derive pleasure from it. Just as young heirs squander their wealth in anticipation of their future inheritance, the soul, whether preoccupied with earthly or heavenly matters, always feeds on its hopes. Therefore, if there is a genuine and fervent hope within you, you will nourish your spirit with visions of heaven and create mental images of the glory of the world to come.

Earnest Groans

A lively hope reveals itself in hearty sighs, groans, and longings for this happiness. “Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption,

the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). Those who have tasted the blessings of Canaan (that is, experienced the goodness and sweetness of God in Christ through the firstfruits of the Spirit) feel that they cannot be in heaven soon enough. When will it happen? They are constantly searching for it. And the closer they get to experiencing it, the more impatient they become.

The longer Christians live in Christ, the stronger their desires for eternal happiness become. They groan while waiting for this blessed hope. "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19). The expression "eagerly waits" means to lift up the head as we do when we want to see something from a great distance. The soul is always looking out. When will the change come? When will it happen? We desire a fuller experience of the consolations of the Holy Spirit, a greater freedom from sin, and a deeper love for God. We have already tasted some of it, and this is why we long for its increase and complete perfection.

Lively Tastes

Hope is "lively" because it quickens the heart and fills it with a spiritual joy (1 Peter 1:3). We "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2). It is a joy that is intended for possession. In worldly things, there is pain, travail, and a burdensome expectation until we come to enjoy them. However, Christians rejoice in their hopes.

“Believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8). It is true that not all believers feel it to the same degree. It depends on a sense of grace, which believers do not always have. But when they meditate on heaven and what Christ has provided for them, they find sweetness spread abroad in their hearts. Worldly hope is only like a dream of a shadow. There is pain and travail in expectation, and there is no satisfaction when we obtain the thing for which we hoped. But our hope in Christ fills the soul with this lively joy. Just as the patriarchs, who waited for the coming of Christ, clung to the promises, so Christians, who wait for happiness and blessedness, find a great deal of sweetness spread abroad in their hearts as they meditate on their hope.

CHAPTER 4

Hope Sanctifies and Sweetens

A lively hope influences all of life. For starters, it purges the heart from the filthiness of sin. "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). How does our hope make us purify ourselves? We look for those things which are holy and pure. In heaven we will be free from sin, and we will be companions of Christ who is holy. And so, we say to ourselves, "Do I look upon this as my happiness? Do I hope to be like Christ in the future, and to be free from the burden of corruption? And will I indulge these lusts in my heart?"

A man hopes for nothing in the future that he would not accomplish at present if it were within his power. We do not look for a sensual paradise but a delightful state that consists of purity and holiness. Whoever sets his heart upon the vision of God and the enjoyment of Christ will necessarily begin to purify himself at present. God has required preparation. Here we are to be made suitable and qualified to accomplish our process of

purification. Hence, we should prepare ourselves more and more for these glorious hopes.

Furthermore, a lively hope withdraws our hearts from present things. "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior" (Phil. 3:20). Our focus should be on heaven, from which we await our Savior. An exceptional glory is set before us. This race is not for trivial matters. Christians become cold and indifferent in their spiritual lives because they do not contemplate heaven often enough. The end motivates the use of means. It sweetens them, despite all difficulties. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). We can never do enough for the Lord. Why? "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord." This will make us persevere to the end, even amid difficulties. Heaven will compensate for everything. We have no reason to begrudge God any service, even if it causes pain and labor to the body. Christ will honor it sufficiently.

Christ will come "to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed" (2 Thess. 1:10). When Christ comes to raise the body, He will bestow so much glory and splendor upon it that the angels will stand in wonder. A world of glory is prepared for us in heaven. Although the work of God is painful, it is also very fruitful. God will reward you as much as you desire, and this

will make you earnest and zealous in the spiritual life. We compare the pains of duty with the pleasures of sin, but the comparison is not made correctly. We should compare the pleasure of sin with the reward. I admit that we can compare Christ's worst (the pains of duty) with the world's best (the pleasures of sin). The former is sweeter to a gracious heart. But the comparison should really be made between the base pleasures of sin and the pure pleasures that are at God's right hand.

CHAPTER 5

Hope Sustains and Strengthens

We are considering how a lively hope influences all of life. In addition to the effects mentioned in the previous chapter, a lively hope makes us upright and sincere in all that we do. Hypocrites pray, fast, and perform duties to be seen by others. Christ says that “they have their reward” (Matt. 6:2). They expect nothing more than what they have already received. But sincerity lies in doing everything with the encouragement of the blessed hope, “knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:24). Nothing on this side of heaven will satisfy the sincere heart.

This blessed hope also sustains us during those difficulties that we encounter in our pursuit of godliness. It helps us reconcile our current emotions with our future expectations. While we may feel overwhelmed by trouble, serving God is not in vain. I confess that we are prone to think so. “Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day

long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning" (Ps. 73:13–14). It is a common temptation to assess everything based on our senses and emotions, but our senses can deceive us when it comes to God. What we feel cannot even be compared to the object of our hope. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). We hear about glory in the gospel, but one day it will be revealed within us (2 Cor. 4:17). Our present troubles are like the scratch of a pin compared to the weighty crown of glory. As the apostle Paul says, "We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4:18). Christian, what is your goal? Is it to protect your interests and live luxuriously? If so, then the blessed hope is not for you. When you set your hope on these earthly things, you will see that they are insignificant compared to what God has prepared for you.

A Christian's blessings are in the future, while his crosses are in the present. For this reason, we need support. Hope is of great use in afflictions and temptations. It is referred to as an anchor in stormy temptations and a helmet in spiritual conflicts. There are external battles and internal fears, but hope serves as both anchor and helmet.

Hope anchors the soul. The apostle says, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the

veil" (Heb. 6:19). It is a sharp anchor that has a secure grasp on solid ground. It is a weighty anchor that will not bend or break. When sailors cast out an anchor which is attached to the ship with a strong cable, they can sleep peacefully. Even when the winds blow and tempests rage, they know the anchor will prevent them from drifting and colliding with rocks. Therefore, hope is a trustworthy anchor.

It is also likened to a helmet: "Take the helmet of salvation" (Eph. 6:17). "But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8). The apostle lists all the components of spiritual armor: faith which shields the body, and hope which protects the head. As long as we can raise our heads and look up to heaven, we are safe no matter what challenges we face. Hope will persist amid all the fiery darts hurled at us.

Finally, this looking for the blessed hope is useful in resisting temptation. Sin often makes enticing promises and thus prevails through carnal desires. The fool promises himself a long life: "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19). The devil came to Christ and presented a strong temptation, showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4:9). Now, faith brings true promises against false promises, heaven against earth, and pleasures at

God's right hand against carnal delights. Just as one nail drives out another, one hope and one promise drive out another. Carnal desires are defeated by spiritual promises presented to the soul.

CHAPTER 6

Looking for the Reward

According to this verse, we ought to look for the reward. Why would God offer rewards to us if we were not supposed to embrace them by faith? The world is drowned in their senses and present satisfactions. People droop if they do not meet with profit and applause. They have the spirit of a servant who prizes present wages above the inheritance. But it is the work of grace to look for the blessed hope, and it is a great help to us in our work. It was the comfort of Christ's human soul. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

Coveting the reward while neglecting the work is sinful. We are all born libertines, meaning we would sever the reward from duty. Some sin in entertaining a carnal notion of heaven, expecting base pleasures and fleshly delights. Such hopes debase the heart. It is the privilege of our profession that we have a sublime hope. Others

sin in looking for the reward as the fruit of merit. If we expect it as wages for work done, we are mercenaries. Sin and death are work and wages, but eternal life is a gift (Rom. 6:23). What is the reason for this difference? I am bound to do good, and I am forbidden to sin. When I do what is forbidden, I deserve punishment. When I do what is commanded, I do not deserve a reward because I am bound to do it. We look "for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21). It is a mercy that we are called and a mercy that we are glorified. We do not deserve anything before conversion or after conversion. We serve a good Master. He has provided comforts for us, not only against our misery but also against our unworthiness. We have not only glory as a reward but mercy as the cause of it. Thus, we must look for the reward and build our hope on it. We do not pray, "Lord, give me heaven, for I deserve it!" Conscience would blush at the immodesty of such a request.

Our happiness must not be our ultimate end. We were made for a twofold end: to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. They must go together. We must desire the enjoyment of God so that we may glorify God for all eternity. Initially, we love God out of self-interest. Later, we love God out of pure affection. Finally, as the new nature gathers strength, we rejoice in God's glory as much as in our own salvation. It is a simple act of adoration. In heaven, we will rejoice in God's glory as much as in our own interest and profit.

CHAPTER 7

The Importance of Looking

Looking for the reward is of utmost importance because of the impact it has on us. First, it loosens the power of sin in our lives. If we lie under the command of present things, it is because we do not awaken our hope and consider the blessedness to come as much as we should. Our hope will have an influence on our practice. It is hope that carries the soul aloft out of the reach of temptation, just as birds, when flying high in the air, need not fear nets or snares. If we keep hope alive, we cannot fail. We are God's house "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end" (Heb. 3:6). If we possess a lively hope, enjoy some taste of the blessedness to come, and experience a constant groaning after it, then we will not go wrong.

Second, looking for the reward urges us to pursue godliness. Some people claim to want to go to heaven, but they do nothing to prepare for it. Their actions go in a different direction from their alleged hope. We are "qualified...to be partakers of the inheritance of the

saints in the light” (Col. 1:12). We are called to “walk worthy of God who calls [us] into His own kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12). We are commanded “to walk worthy of the calling with which [we] were called” (Eph. 4:1). There is a compatibility between people and their greatest hope. A Christian reveals his hope in his dispositions and actions, and he lives as an heir of the grace of life. A fleeting hope has no effect. But serious sighs and heartfelt groans will produce a compatibility in the disposition of our hearts, and we will become more holy. There will be greater abhorrence of sin, greater disregard for the world, and greater diligence in the spiritual life.

When you live as if your hope were only in this world, you act like a prince who embraces a heap of dung. For those who are destined for a great and glorious hope to live as if their happiness is only here on earth, amassing worldly comforts, is a cause for lamentation. If you were to see a man toiling in a filthy ditch, soiling himself with dirt, you would never think that he was the heir to a crown and kingdom. Similarly, when we live as worldly people, it means there is a disconnect between our practice and our alleged hope. If there is a blatant contradiction between the two, do we really think we will go to heaven? What would we think of the person who travels south when his destiny is north? Can we expect to be filled with God when God is not even in our thoughts? Can we long for the company of Christ when we disregard His ordinances? Can we value the

communion of saints when we consider good company to be a prison? Can we expect a sinless condition when we despise the power of godliness? Many people deceive themselves with false hope when there is a clear contradiction between their alleged hope and how they live.

Third, looking for the reward serves to quicken us in our endeavors. The more we look for heaven, the more it engages us to strictness of life. "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him" (2 Cor. 5:8–9). Our great care is that we may live and die in God's grace because we are confident that we will live with the Lord when we depart from the body. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21). God is so gracious in Christ, providing great things for such unworthy creatures. We receive glory out of the hands of mercy. This is a mighty engagement to make us guard against the decay of love.

CHAPTER 8

The Method of Looking

There is much happiness reserved for the children of God. But as we look for the blessed hope, we must pursue the right method.

Believe It

We must believe in God's being and bounty. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). These two principles, "He is" and "He is a rewarder," are the fundamental axioms that uphold all religion. Because there is a mist upon a carnal heart, unbelievers believe no more than they can see. But "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). The natural man cannot see beyond time and death. By faith we are able to look into the other world and see the blessedness to come.

Faith is weak in most of us, and we waver especially in believing in God's bounty. His being is manifested

in present effects, but His bounty is revealed in His rewards, which are entirely in the future. Therefore, we must strengthen faith as much as we can. God has been faithful in all things, and He will not fail us in the end. Experience begets hope (Rom. 5:4). If we preached a God who needed His creatures, then we might have reason to suspect what He says. But He has no interest to gratify. His vehement longings are for our good and profit. "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" (Deut. 5:29). God does not say, "that it might be well with Me," but "well with them."

God's being is infinite and eternal, and so too is the reward. It is "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). God's gifts are like Himself, suitable to His infinite mercy and eternal duration. They are also suitable to Christ's merit. The comforts of this world may be bought with gold and silver, but "you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18–19). God gave so great a price out of His own treasury to oblige His justice to be our friend.

People are naturally capable of a higher condition of mind and affections, to know and love God. Godliness must have a better recompense than what is found in the

world. Earthly gifts are but the scraps of God's providence (Ps. 17:14). The wiser people are, the more they despise these things. Children are satisfied with toys, but grace cannot be satisfied with the world without a higher enjoyment of God. There must be a reward. There is a disposition and instinct in nature toward eternal happiness. A person's soul, like a sponge, is thirsty and seeks to be satisfied. "Who will show us any good?" (Ps. 4:6). Initially, people settle for the creature because it is readily available, but it does not satisfy. When we have outward blessings, our soul is not fully satisfied. There is something missing from our peace and rest. Our desires run until we come to enjoy God. This "blessed hope" is the only reward that is suitable to human nature.

Apply It

Besides believing God's promises, we must confirm our title to them. It is a comfortless meditation to think of a blessed hope unless we have an interest in it. Hope never has a livelier influence than when it is founded upon a sense of our own interest. "I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19:25). "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1). "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all

who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). We reason to ourselves: there is not only a heaven, but it is for me.

Is hope the fruit of assurance? It is the fruit of faith as well as of assurance. It is very comforting when we can discern our interest in the promise. Before we can hope, our qualification must be supposed, for it is our evidence. Let me urge you, therefore, to secure your title to heaven. In such an important matter, should we be uncertain? Can we be at peace without being sure of heaven? It is possible to lack assurance and still enter heaven. Some are "scarcely saved" (1 Peter 4:18). Others have an abundant entrance. "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10–11).

We must seek after assurance. If we do not, we lose the experience of heaven on earth, which consists of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, and we miss out on the power of hope. Uncertainty has little effectiveness. It reveals a false security when people can be content to live without knowing what will become of them.

To attain assurance, we must do the following. First, we must accept God's offer. "Hear it, and know for yourself" (Job 5:27). We must embrace these hopes, take God at His word, make an agreement with Him, and confidently fulfill our part of the covenant, knowing that God will not fail us. When the book of the law was read,

Moses sprinkled half of the blood on the altar to demonstrate that God promised to bless them, and he sprinkled the other half on the people to bind them to obedience (Ex. 24:6, 8). All Christians must have “the answer of a good conscience” (1 Peter 3:21).

Second, we must adhere to God’s will. We must stay close to this hope as we walk in obedience. If we do God’s work, we will undoubtedly receive our reward. “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air” (1 Cor. 9:26).

Third, we must rest upon God, even with some doubts and fears, for the manifestation of this glory. Though we may not be able to say, “It is mine,” we continue to wait with hope until change comes, eagerly anticipating the mercy of Christ so that we can entrust our soul to Him. This is what it means to “commit [your] souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19). We are placing our soul into the hands of God who created us.

Expect It

This is the formal act of hope, which is emphasized in our text. This expectation of blessedness is the strength of the inward man. The demons have faith, but it is without hope, and therefore it provides no refreshment (James 2:19). It is a light that does not refresh; rather, it scorches. It is our duty to expect at present. “We were saved in this hope” (Rom. 8:24). In innocence, there was

no use (or little use) for hope. In heaven, there will be none at all because the object of our happiness will be present. But now, we have only a taste, which makes us long for more. Faith, through hope, gives them present substance. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). This hope is an earnest lifting of the mind to look for what faith counts as real.

CHAPTER 9

The Means of Looking

How are we to look for this blessed hope? There are three principal means.

Consider It

Hope is a survey of the land of promise. “And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: ‘Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever’” (Gen. 13:14–15). It is a great advantage to think of heaven because it makes it present to us. Heaven deserves our best thoughts. In the morning it would be a good preservative to keep us from succumbing to the power of present things. Hope sets the mind to work. In times of trouble and suffering, we enjoy a happy suggestion. The mind is untouched no matter what the body suffers. When bodily sicknesses remind us of death, when sense and speech fail, the love of God never fails. Though we go down to the grave, this hope comforts us.

"And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:26–27).

Long for It

Hope cannot be without groans. Love for Christ cannot be without Him. It is never content. "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1–2). There is our God, our Christ, our rest. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21). The new nature cannot be without these desires. God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3). God sits in heaven, dispensing grace, while Christ conveys it. It is from there that our mercies, comforts, and joys come. Therefore, it goes against the tendency of the new nature to not long to be where Christ is. He is our greatest happiness. On earth we have sustenance as in a foreign land, but our interest and estate are in heaven. However unworthy we may be, infinite mercy is in heaven where we receive the full fruition of our redemption.

Wait for It

There are groans of expectation as well as desire. We have a fair charter granted by God the Father, written with the blood of Christ, and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

To strengthen our expectation, we ought to consider the following.

First, Christ's goodness and mercy. We look "for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21). He never shows any reluctance toward our well-being or inclination toward our destruction.

Second, God's faithfulness. It is impossible for God to lie. Hence, we flee to Him "for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil" (Heb. 6:18–19). God values His word more than heaven and earth. If an honest person has made a promise, he will keep it. We can rely even more on the faithful God.

Third, God's power. If our souls were under our control, we might fear. However, we "are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5). Being convinced of God's power, Abraham, "contrary to hope, in hope believed" (Rom. 4:18).

Fourth, Christ's merit and intercession. "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34). Our right to heaven is obtained through Christ's merit, and it is preserved for us through His intercession.

CHAPTER 10

The Removal of Sin

We look for the blessed hope. The object of our hope is sometimes referred to as life, glory, joy, or pleasure. It is a life that will never be extinguished: “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 21). It is called “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). In terms of its measure, it is beyond our ability to understand. It is joy and pleasure without mixture and without end: “In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11).

This hope is blessed because it leads us to the experience of absolute blessedness. We cannot fully comprehend it now. When we come to enjoy it, we will find it to be beyond anything we could have conceived. What we can know of it at present reveals that it is a blessed thing, but we will understand it best when we hear the great voice calling us: “Come up here, and I will show you” (Rev. 4:1).

Let me briefly explain it to you. In blessedness, all evil is removed, and there is a complete abundance and

presence of all that is good. As long as the slightest evil remains, a person is not truly blessed but only less miserable. If a person had everything his heart desired, what good would it do him? When Haman lacked Mordecai's respect, he said, "All this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate" (Est. 5:13). Ahab had the kingdom of Israel, yet he became sick because he could not have Naboth's vineyard. If a person is perfectly prepared for a journey, even a small pebble in his shoe will cause great discomfort. In war, if one piece of equipment is missing or malfunctioning, everything comes to a halt. In the body, if one joint is broken, it is enough to make us uncomfortable, even if everything else is intact. Therefore, if there is the slightest evil, a person cannot be completely happy.

We look for the removal of all evil, which is twofold—sin and punishment. Sin is the worst evil. Affliction is evil, but it is not evil in itself, only in our sense and feeling. If a person had no sensation, being scourged would not cause pain. But sin is evil regardless of our feelings, and it is even worse when we do not feel it. It is indeed evil because it separates us from the greatest good. Affliction does not separate us from God; in fact, it can draw us closer to Him. Many people would never have known God if not for their afflictions. However, sin separates us from God. "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isa. 59:2).

Nothing is as repulsive and repugnant to God as sin. This is what grieves the saints the most. Paul laments, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24). Paul's afflictions did not lead him to cry out for deliverance. Instead, he considered his sinful nature as the worst of all. He was more troubled by his lusts than by his physical suffering. This is the disposition of the saints. They are weary of the world not only because they suffer while others enjoy God but because they sin while others glorify God.

When carnal people are driven out of the world, they fantasize about heaven as a place of refuge. However, what troubles godly people is their sin. But in heaven, there is no sin. Christ will present "to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). The glorified saints will have no blemishes or imperfections. Christ presents them to God to demonstrate the cleansing power of His blood. They are pure and clean, without any spot or wrinkle. In heaven, all sins are eliminated. We struggle to mortify just one lust here on earth, and still our nature rebels against us. It is a great achievement if sin's dominion is taken away in this life, but sin is completely abolished in heaven. We will no longer displease God, and we will be freed from all the immediate and inseparable consequences of original sin. Our love will be perfect and, as a result, our souls will be fully focused on contemplating God. That is the

reason why there will be no more wandering thoughts. In heaven, we will be free from pride, which persists as long as life does. It is referred to as the “pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Currently, we cannot receive revelations without becoming proud of them (2 Cor. 12:7). The influence of grace tends to make us prone to pride. There is a flaw in every perfection. However, in heaven, we will be exalted and humbled because we will be most holy.

Is not this a blessed hope, to know that we will exist in a sinless state, resembling Christ in purity and holiness? “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Have you struggled and groaned under sin throughout your life? Well, it will be blotted out when the refreshing days come.

Just as there will be no sin, there will be no temptation. There was a tempter in paradise, but there are none in heaven. Satan has been cast out, and now the saints fill the vacant rooms of the fallen angels. The world is a valley of temptations, for it is the devil’s territory, but nothing “that defiles” enters heaven (Rev. 21:27). Oh, Christians, lift up your heads! In heaven, you will be free from sin, and you will no longer displease God. Here on earth, we cry out, “Lord, deliver us from evil,” but our cries are fully answered there in heaven. Grace weakens sin, but glory abolishes it, and the old Adam is left in the grave never to rise again.

CHAPTER 11

The Removal of Affliction

In blessedness the evil of affliction is also removed. Whatever is painful and burdensome to nature is a fruit of the fall, a mark of our rebellion against God. Therefore, affliction must be taken away if we are to be completely happy. Just as in hell there is only evil, a cup of wrath unmixed with even the slightest bit of mercy, in heaven there is only happiness. "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4). The afflictions of the soul are gone. There is no more doubt of God's love or sense of His displeasure. At present, though we are pardoned and the wound is healed, the scars remain. God sometimes hides His face from us here on earth. We need to experience both vinegar and gall as well as honey and sweetness so that we may better appreciate our Christian comforts. The world is a middle place, standing between hell and heaven, and therefore it has elements of both. The saints have their mixture of

pleasure and sorrow. As Job says, "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10). But in heaven, there is "fullness of joy" and "pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11).

Here we complain that the candle of the Lord does not shine as brightly as it did in the past. But in heaven our sun remains at high noon, without clouds or darkness. No night follows. The afflictions of the body are removed. Heaven is a happy place where no one is sick. Here, our physical body is called "lowly" (Phil. 3:21) because it is the instrument of sin and subject to disease. We have the root of disease (sin) in the soul and the matter of disease (corruption) in the body. Just as wood is eaten by worms that breed in it, our bodies have principles of corruption that eventually destroy them. But in heaven, we are completely incorruptible. Moreover, the body rises in perfect proportion. Whatever was malformed or misshapen in the first edition is corrected in the second.

Heaven is a peaceful place. When there are tumults in the world, God is depicted as sitting in the heavens in a state of tranquility (Ps. 2:4). Those blessed spirits are not disturbed in any way. Wicked people cannot harm or abuse them. Here, the mere company of the wicked is a burden. Lot's righteous soul was "oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked" (2 Peter 2:7). David complained, "Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar!" (Ps. 120:5). But in heaven, "the Son

of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness" (Matt. 13:41). The wicked will be bound and cast into utter darkness just as people who refuse to be governed are sent to prison.

Here, poor saints are subject to various afflictions: labor, thirst, hunger, cold, and nakedness. But all of these will cease in heaven. It is a rich inheritance as well as a glorious one (Eph. 1:18). The distinctions of poor and rich, as they are understood in the world, do not survive beyond time. We will have an abundance of true riches, which include eternal glory and the full enjoyment of God. Labor ceases, although there is a continued exercise of grace. All things find rest when they are in their proper place. We still serve God but without weariness. Indeed, we will be freed from the necessities of nature, such as eating, drinking, and sleeping. The use of food and the function of the stomach are abolished (1 Cor. 6:13). It is a part of our misery that our life is sustained by so many creatures. Sheep provide us with clothing, and the animals of the earth and the fish of the sea provide us with food, all to support a decaying structure that is constantly on the verge of collapse. But in heaven, we will be above the need for food, drink, and clothing. Our nourishment and sustenance will come from doing our Father's will. Nakedness will not bring shame but glory, and the body will no longer hinder the soul but assist it. The flesh that we currently carry around with us is the

prison of the soul from which it looks out through the windows of the senses. But in heaven, it will no longer be the prison of the soul but its temple.

In short, everything I have to say about this matter is summed up in Revelation 21:4, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." It will be an entirely different kind of existence, free from the distractions of worldly affairs. Our sole occupation will be to think about God and study Him, but without weariness, satiety, or distraction.

CHAPTER 12

The Blessedness of the Body

As we have noted, blessedness includes the removal of all evil. It also includes the convergence of all that is good. For our happiness, it is necessary that our comforts be complete. "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11). These comforts will be complete in terms of their magnitude and the degree to which they are enjoyed. It is also necessary that our comforts be eternal. "For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

We hope for a state in which we will be happy, and we will be blessed in our relationships. We are brought into the presence of God, which is blessedness itself, and into the sight and fellowship of His blessed Son as well as into the company of blessed angels and saints.

Let's begin with the blessedness of our body. It is at present a temple of the Holy Spirit. He cannot leave His dwelling place, and therefore He raises it up, conforming it to Christ's glorious body (Phil. 3:21). Our body will

be like Christ's body for clarity, agility, ability, and incorruptibility. What is raised will be a completely different body. For the present, it is a beautiful structure in which God has shown His workmanship. Every member is so arranged for the service and beauty of the whole. But it is a lowly body, subjected to disease, humbled by need, injured by violence, dissolved by death, and reduced to dust in the grave. This is the body that we carry with us. It is a mass of flesh, adorned to be food for worms. People make a great effort to embalm it with spices to prevent decomposition, but it eventually decays. This lowly body will rise in a different manner. When the sun appears, the stars disappear; their brightness is overshadowed and dimmed. But when the Sun of righteousness appears on the last day, He does not obscure our glory but perfects it.

How will our bodies be like Christ's glorious body? "The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:42–44). Let me highlight three expressions.

First, it is an incorruptible body. At present it succumbs to the decay of nature, and it is exercised with pain until it falls like ripe fruit into the grave. But at the resurrection, it will be clothed with immortality, completely impervious to suffering. This is a great comfort to those who are tormented by pain, humbled by disease, or

withered by age. They will have a body without pain or decay, always in the spring of youth. The trees of paradise are always green.

Second, it is a glorious body. At present it is often deformed. Like a flower, all beauty is lost in sickness, withered with age, or defaced by the various accidents of life. But at the resurrection, our bodies will be glorious like Christ's body. We will not be conformed to the first Adam but the last Adam. When Christ was transfigured on the mount, "His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matt. 17:2). The beams of glory were so strong that the disciples could not bear the brightness of Christ's garments. Their eyes could not endure what His garments could not contain. Paul could not bear the light that shone on him when Christ appeared to him from heaven, and he was completely confounded and struck blind (Acts 9:3-4). From this, we can imagine a little what the glory of our bodies will be like, for we will be like Him. After spending forty days in conversation with God, the appearance of Moses's face was altered, and he had to cover it with a veil. In this low state in which we find ourselves, we must take note of these hints.

Third, it is a spiritual body. It will be more disposed for spiritual uses and for the enjoyments and employments of grace. At present it is a natural body and a great burden to us. It is not a skillful instrument for the soul. We are not capable of bearing the abundance of glory.

But at the resurrection it will be more spacious, like a wide vessel, to contain all that God will bestow. The disciples were overwhelmed at Christ's transfiguration (Matt. 17:6). We cannot receive such an extensive outpouring and overflowing of glory as we will have at that time. At present strong emotions and elevated thoughts overcome us and cause ecstasy and rapture. Extraordinary objects overwhelm the faculty. But in glory it is different. God reveals Himself to us in a greater extent, and we are more capable of enduring it.

CHAPTER 13

The Perfection of Knowledge

In the last chapter, we considered the blessedness of the body in glory. Now, we turn to the blessedness of the soul, which is the heaven of heavens. It is called “the inheritance of the saints in the light” (Col. 1:12). It is not for those who know no other heaven but eating, drinking, sleeping, and indulging in filthy and crude pleasures. It is an inheritance in light, and it is for saints who know how to value spiritual delights. But what is the happiness of the soul? Is it in knowledge or love? Surely, it is in both. Our happiness consists in the knowledge and love of God, from which results union with God and enjoyment of God. But which is to be preferred, to know God or love God? That is the question.

Christ declares, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). So, it seems that the heaven of heavens is to have the understanding satisfied with the knowledge of God. The psalmist proclaims, “As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be

satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Ps. 17:15). That is our happiness. We go to heaven to know more of God.

On the other hand, John writes, "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). This indicates that it is not sight alone that makes us happy. The embrace of the soul is through love, and the possession of the soul is through acts of love. Therefore, it seems that love should have the preeminence.

But we do not need to choose between the two. Through knowing, we come to love, and through loving, we come to know. As is light, so is love, and so is enjoyment. At present we love little because we know little (John 4:10). The more we love, the more we know. This is a fire that gives light.

There are three perfections that await us in glory. The first is the perfection of knowledge. All the faculties must be satisfied before we can be happy. This is especially true of the mind, which is the noblest faculty. There is a natural inclination toward knowledge, and the soul finds contentment in contemplating truth (Prov. 24:13–14). Right and clear thoughts of God bring joy. "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Ps. 19:10). Those who are devoted to pleasures do not experience such exquisite delight. Therefore, a large part of our happiness in heaven is to have more light and knowledge of God and His ways. We will know many mysteries of salvation such as

(1) the nature of God (Ps. 17:15), (2) the union of the two natures in the person of Christ (John 17:24), (3) our union with Christ and through Christ with God (John 14:20), and (4) the course of God's decrees and providences for our good (1 Cor. 13:12). We will be able to see how God's unchangeable plan for our salvation has been carried out, through all the events of this present life, to bring us safely to the heavenly state.

These are the depths of God, and currently there is darkness upon them. The church is like a grammar school, and heaven is like a university. We will have better eyes and a different kind of light. Currently, prophecy is only partial, but then our understanding will be immediate. "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Currently, we see Him as He chooses to reveal Himself, but then we will see Him as He is. Currently, we see what He is not (incorruptible, immortal, unchangeable) rather than what He is. Currently, we see Him as He is in us and other creatures, and we trace Him through the effects of His power, wisdom, and goodness, but then we will see Him as He is in Himself. We will know Him directly. "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). In creation, there are traces and footprints of God. In the law, there is a shadow of God. In the

gospel, there is an image of God, a beautiful representation of God, like a picture. But in heaven, there is the face of God. We will have excellent books to study—the magnificent display of glory, the majesty of Christ's person. We will be constantly in the presence of the Lamb. God will reveal Himself to us in the highest ways of which we are capable.

CHAPTER 14

The Perfection of Love

In terms of the blessedness of the soul, there are three perfections that await us in glory. We examined the first in the last chapter—the perfection of knowledge. The second is the perfection of love. Our hearts will cleave constantly to God without change, weariness, or distraction. If we delight in anything at present, we soon grow weary of it, but heavenly communion with God will always be new and fresh.

Currently, there are many distractions that turn us aside to the creature, but in glory there will be eternal comfort and complacency, a continual Sabbath that never grows weary or burdensome. The whole heart will run after Christ. We will never lack the actual breathings of the Holy Spirit. At present we have several motions, but then Christ will be a more lovely object, and the delight of the soul will be carried out to Him without satiation. We will have a sweet complacency in Him.

At present, outward things clog the appetite. As soon as we have them, we despise them because our

desires are restless. We sip at them as the bee does the flower, and then we must have a change, and we move to a new flower. But, in glory, there will be an eternal complacency in Christ. Currently, we are troubled when we lack outward comforts and sickened when we have them. Curiosity is soon satisfied, and fruition discovers their imperfection. The more they are enjoyed, the less they are beloved. And so, our affections are confounded by experience. But, in glory, the more we enjoy God, the more His infinite perfections are manifested, and our pleasure is augmented by our enjoyment.

The third perfection is a complete union with God and fruition of Him (2 Cor. 5:6; Phil. 1:23). At present we are united to Christ by faith, but that is nothing compared to sight and immediate intuition. We lay hold upon Christ, but we do not have such an absolute possession of Him. He is a head that gives Himself, not out of necessity but out of choice and pleasure. Therefore, our communion with Christ is not as perpetual and familiar as it will be in glory. Just as iron that lies long in the fire seems to be changed into the nature of the fire, so we will be more conformed and changed into the likeness of Christ (Ps. 16:11). Present comforts are not large enough to convey as much of God to us as we will receive when God is all in all immediately. "Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). There

is no temple or ordinance in heaven, but the Lamb is its light. We will enjoy God without means or the intervention of ordinances. We are fed among the lilies, but it is only until the day breaks and the shadows flee away (Song 2:16–17).

CHAPTER 15

Blessedness in Our Relationships

On that day, we will be blessed in our relationships with God, Christ, saints, and angels.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. (Heb. 12:22–24)

We will see God in Christ. The physical eye, which cannot look upon the sun, will be glorified and strengthened. Though it cannot see God's essence, it will see greater manifestations of His glory than it is able to behold at present. The Father will welcome us as He welcomed Christ. "Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession" (Ps. 2:8). He will say to us: "Well done, good

and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matt. 25:21). We will not come into His presence with shame. Sin causes shame and makes us shy of God. But just as the eye cannot endure light when it is wronged, a guilty conscience makes us afraid of God's presence. However, when we are perfectly sanctified and sin is removed, we will be able to stand in the presence of God.

The same goes for Christ. He cannot be content without your company, and you should not be satisfied without His (John 14:3). What a joyful meeting there will be between us and our Redeemer! Christ longs for the blessed hour as you do. There will be a different sight of Christ in heaven compared to when He was in the days of His flesh. There will be joy in heaven when Christ says, "I am Jesus, your brother, your Savior, your Redeemer." He will lead us to God in a full company, and say, "Here am I and the children whom [You have] given Me" (Heb. 2:13). What a blessed sight it will be!

As for the angels, what a welcome there will be! When Christ entered heaven, they welcomed Him with applause and acclamations (Ps. 24:7-10). They will also welcome the saints to heaven with acclamations. They delight in the good of men, in their creation, redemption, and conversion. Surely, they will delight in the glorification of a sinner.

As for the saints, your acquaintances with whom you have prayed, suffered, and conversed, memory is not abolished in heaven but perfected. We will know then those whom we knew here. A minister will see the crown and fruit of his labors (1 Thess. 2:19). Those who have been relieved by us will welcome us into heaven (Luke 16:9). Yes, we will know those whom we never met on earth. We will “sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 8:11). Just as Peter recognized Moses and Elijah at Christ’s transfiguration, though they had died hundreds of years earlier, so we will know one another. Like people at a feast who are free and familiar with one another, we will discuss God’s wisdom, mercy, and justice in the work of redemption. Moses and Elijah talked with Christ in the same way (Luke 9:30–31). We will also have conversations about the wonderful providence of God in guiding us to glory, just as travelers enjoy discussing the challenges and dangers of the journey. The saints will be clothed with majesty and glory, more lovely than ever before, and there will be an innumerable company of them. Heaven is not only described as a palace but a city, filled with a multitude that no one can count.

CHAPTER 16

A Cause of Rejoicing

As for the manner of our blessedness, we will be filled with the fullness of God, and we will eternally lose ourselves in an ocean of sweetness. The soul will be stretched out to the greatest capacity of a creature, and God will fill it. At present we have only a few drops, but in glory we will have as much as we can hold. "As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Ps. 17:15). There will be complete joy and satisfaction. All sin and sorrow will be taken away. We will enter our Master's joy. In heaven, the soul is so full of joy and glory that it is inexpressible.

As for the duration of our blessedness, it is eternal and immortal. We can never lose it. This doubles our joy and contentment. God's love is everlasting, and so our happiness will be everlasting. There will be no fear of losing it. "They shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 22:5). We will never lay aside our crown of glory. It is a garland that will never wither. It is not only an eternal state but a state of actual delight. Christ's manifestations are not

lessened by enjoyment. We will always have the actual comfort of His presence.

All that to say, the children of God are not as miserable as they might seem. They have hopes and joys that exist in an unseen realm. It is not an unfamiliar land but an invisible one. Like pearls and treasures that are concealed from sight, the glory and blessedness of a Christian are also hidden. Our happiness is a mystery to those with worldly hearts because it lies in another world. "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be" (1 John 3:2). As the children of God, we are still subject to the uncertainties and difficulties of the present world just like everyone else. Our happiness can only be perceived with spiritual eyes through spiritual light (Eph. 1:18). Regardless of how Christians may appear to the world (humbled, afflicted, and despised), they are truly blessed. Just as animals cannot comprehend the excellence of a human, carnal people fail to recognize the greatness of the saints. A Christian's glory and blessedness are concealed and disguised, and they will only be fully revealed on the day of judgment. "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:3-4).

Just as light is veiled within a dark lantern until the cover is removed, there is an eclipse over the glory of a Christian. Currently, it is covered and obscured, which is why Christians often face criticism and reproach. This

was also the case with Christ in the world, and we are called to be like Him. However, on that day, everything will be revealed. In winter, a garden and a field do not appear to be different, and so it is with believers and other people until the glorious day of Christ's return when we will be clothed in our finest robes.

Furthermore, a significant portion of this happiness is even hidden from us. If we relied solely on our senses and experiences, there would be no other group of people in the world as wretched as God's dearest servants. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Cor. 15:19). However, through the lens of faith, we catch glimpses of it from time to time. Through meditation, a window opens into the new Jerusalem, and we catch fleeting glimpses of our eternal inheritance. Just as a young heir may not fully comprehend the details of his future estate, we do not fully grasp the profound happiness that awaits us in the light.

CHAPTER 17

A Cause of Thanksgiving

We have reason to be thankful during the time of our pilgrimage in this world while we are still susceptible to sin and sorrow. We may bless God even now. This is one reason why God has revealed these things before we come to enjoy them. This is one effect of the certainty of faith: it begins the life of heaven now, and we can praise God before we enjoy it. Though we are subject to sin and misery at present, faith will rejoice in Him before we enjoy Him.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.
(1 Peter 1:3–4)

The apostle blesses God for his hope. Certainly, we may bless God when He blesses us, meaning our blessing

is merely an echo of His (Eph. 1:3). We ought to bless Him for our hopes as well as our enjoyments, for the best of our portion is yet to come. Whenever we think of eternity, we should immediately begin to bless God, regardless of our present circumstances. To this end, let me show you how much we expect in glory.

There is freedom from eternal torment, and there is the possession of eternal glory. Present wrath is nothing compared to the wrath to come (2 Thess. 1:9). We are delivered from the everlasting flames that are the portion of the condemned. We tremble at the name of hell. What would we do when faced with these endless and relentless torments? What would it be like to lie under God's wrath forever? We were involved in the same sin and guilt as others; therefore, we could have been bound and cast into hell. Why were we chosen and others left to perish? Oh, let us bless God for this! We are like brands plucked out of the burning fire (Zech. 3:2). Though we may feel the sting of the rod upon our back, we must remember that this is nothing compared to the wrath to come. "But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). We bless God when we think of hell as a danger that we have escaped through Christ.

As for heaven, the positive part of this blessedness, we have a right to it, though not an actual enjoyment of it. Sometimes, heaven is said to be kept for us, and sometimes we are said to be kept for heaven (1 Peter 1:5).

Christ holds heaven in our right, our place, and our names, and we are kept by the power of God for heaven. Furthermore, heaven is prepared for us. "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (Matt. 25:34). And we are prepared for heaven. He makes known "the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory" (Rom. 9:23).

CHAPTER 18

Giving Thanks to God Triune

In the last chapter, we observed that we give thanks when we consider our freedom from eternal torment and our possession of eternal glory. Here we will see that we are also to give thanks when we consider our engagement to all the persons of the triune God.

God the Father

We should admire God's love. It is a wonder that a poor worm should be exalted, a clod of earth should shine like the sun, my dark soul should be purified and glorified. God could not satisfy Himself with temporal kindness, with loving us for a while. He must love us forever. "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children" (Ps. 103:17). From eternity to eternity, God is our God.

Moreover, small things would not content Him, and so we must be partakers of complete blessedness.

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (1 John 3:1-2)

We should ponder the great love of God in predestinating us to such glory. There is a great deal of mercy showered upon us during our journey, but even more stored up for us. "Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men!" (Ps. 31:19). Oh, the magnitude of God's love!

Infinite mercy sets out to see what it can do for those who are rebels and enemies of God. We may think about it, but we cannot fully express it. The least of God's mercies is more than we can acknowledge. How much more this complete portion, for here God sets out to make a creature as happy as it can be! The Lord has gone to the extreme in nothing but His love. He has nothing greater to give us than Christ. He cannot love us more; nothing more can be done. There can be no greater happiness than the eternal enjoyment of Him. All the promises of the Word fall short of what you will enjoy. The Scriptures, which are sufficient to make the people of God perfect here, are inadequate when it comes to speaking

of heaven and its glory (1 Cor. 13:9). The Scriptures can only speak in part. There are no words or notions in the world sufficient to express what God has prepared, and we do not have ears to hear it. All our notions of things must be derived from what is apparent to our sense and understanding. Since heaven surpasses both, we cannot grasp its glory. The Scriptures leave it to be admired in silence. Oh, we should admire the love of God the Father who has provided such great things for us!

God the Son

We must consider how deeply we are engaged to Christ. To deliver us from the wrath to come, He was made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). In hell there is a pain and sense of God's wrath. Christ experienced the suspension of the joy and actual consolation of His divine nature, a loss that cannot be imagined (Matt. 27:46). Upon the cross, He had an actual feeling of the wrath of God. Therefore, He says, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death" (Matt. 26:38). He was forsaken so that we might not be separated from God for eternity, and His soul was heavy unto death so that we might not be cast into eternal flames.

For the positive part, we have everlasting glory. Christ left heaven so that we might enjoy heaven. He came from heaven, returned to heaven, and will come again from heaven to bring us there with even more triumph. He came at first to pay the price for our glory.

God did not sell it at an easy rate. It was no easy matter to bring sinful creatures so close to God. The Lord would not even negotiate with fallen angels. Once they became sinners, they were no longer allowed to remain in His presence. They were cast out of heaven. The door was shut against us, but Christ came to open it. Christ came to open paradise, which was guarded with a flaming sword. He took the blow so that we might have communion with God. When He was about to die, He made His last will and testament. Heaven was His to bestow upon all His heirs. "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). And then He went back to heaven as our forerunner to prepare a place for us (John 14:2). He went as a guardian to seize heaven in our name and to keep it for us. He will come again as the husband of the church to bring us to His Father's house with triumph.

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." (Rev. 5:8-9)

Christ's humility was for our exaltation. Therefore, even here on earth, we may bless God (for the elders represent the church on earth) for His great mercy to us in Christ.

God the Spirit

We must also consider how much we are indebted to the Holy Spirit, who prepares and equips us for this joyful state and confirms our claim to it. That is why He is called a "guarantee" (2 Cor. 5:5). The Holy Spirit shapes and forms all the vessels of glory, preparing them for heaven. It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in us, who works on us and prepares us for this great and blessed hope. So, whenever we think of it, our hearts should be lifted up in gratitude. It is not only the duty of those who are in possession of glory to praise God but of those to whom this hope is revealed. We must praise the Lord during our earthly journey for this great inheritance reserved for us in heaven.

CHAPTER 19

The Excellence of the Gospel

Those who forfeit the blessed hope of eternal life for a little worldly satisfaction have a wicked heart. When we consider all the temptations of the world, we realize how insignificant they are compared to the eternal glory that awaits us. If our hearts were not desperately wicked, we would not be drawn toward these things. What is vain-glory compared to eternal glory? What are a few fleeting pleasures compared to the everlasting pleasures at God's side? What are worldly riches compared to our glorious inheritance? A sinner forfeits a blessed hope that surpasses all earthly kingdoms and possessions. This is why they will be scorned by angels on the last day. "Here is the man who did not make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness" (Ps. 52:7). They will be ashamed in the presence of the whole congregation for being so foolishly inclined toward their own ruin, and this will torment them forever. Nothing torments people more than their foolish choices. Conscience will forever remind them of

the disadvantage of forsaking God for something worthless. They rejected a glorious hope for trivial pleasure and worldly satisfaction. This shame will last for all eternity.

Oh, the excellence of the Christian religion! There is purity in its precepts. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps. 19:7-8). There is certainty in its principles, trust established between us and God, so that we may rely on Him with comfort and satisfaction. "Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it'" (Jer. 6:16). There are no rewards anywhere else like those in the Christian profession. Christ "has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). Life and immortality are revelations unique to the gospel. Everything has been brought to light. We can look beyond the grave, and there is no mist or darkness over things to come because God has acquainted us with the gospel. If God had kept this secret to Himself, we would have lacked support in our trouble and encouragement in the practice of holiness. Therefore, we must value the gospel. It is the charter of our blessed hope.

CHAPTER 20

A Call to Diligence

When we consider the blessedness to come, we have no reason to be lazy in God's work or to complain about the effort required in His service. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). God's children often feel like they can never do enough for Him, considering the reward He has prepared for them in Christ. A thousand years of service would not be enough to deserve even an hour of the blessed hope, let alone eternal happiness. When we see what awaits us, we will be ashamed that we have not done more work for God, especially considering the great encouragement we have received. "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?'" (Matt. 25:37). They acknowledge that their actions are insignificant. "Lord, we have done so little!" On the day of judgment, the saints will experience the highest exaltation yet the deepest self-abasement. They

will be filled with wonder. Christ will acknowledge them while they disown their own deeds, and He will reward them. So, we must not complain of God's commandments but remember that we have the greatest reward.

In addition to serving the Lord, we must be ready to despise all earthly things no matter how great they might be. We carry a mortal body and an immortal soul. The body lasts only for a time, but the soul survives and outlives the body's happiness. Why do we exhaust ourselves in collecting sticks for our nest when tomorrow we will be gone? Here we "dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before a moth" (Job 4:19). Our position in this world is compared to a tent, which is a movable dwelling, but our position in heaven is compared to a temple. Here they are only "houses of clay," which will crumble into dust. Moreover, we are said to be "crushed before a moth," which is but a little dust. The world is nothing more than a house of pottery that will soon be broken. Will we risk the loss of eternal hope for the conveniences of a temporary life? Will we harm the soul to satisfy the body? Our main concern should be for that place where we will live the longest. In the other world, we have the longest life and the most glorious possession; therefore, our main concern should be for it.

CHAPTER 21

A Call to Watchfulness

Given our hope, we have little cause to envy carnal people. The hope of our profession is a blessed hope. This was David's source of protection when he was in daily danger. While his enemies were prosperous, how did he comfort himself? "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Ps. 17:15). Whatever we have here is either for our personal use or for our posterity. A worldly state is only valuable on these two grounds.

For the first, our personal use. Their bellies are filled with "hidden treasure" (Ps. 17:14). David means food and other worldly comforts. These are called "hidden treasures" because they are not within everyone's grasp. They are not common pleasures. The poor do not attain to them. But the point is their portion is nothing more than filling their belly. This is no different than the happiness of animals. Here is the entirety of a carnal person's happiness, that which God allows him as his portion. But a Christian has a better portion. Present communion with God is far superior to all the delicacies in the world.

But that is not all. We will be satisfied forever. "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness." A child of God has his happiness to the fullest when he dies. He is going down to sleep in the grave, and when he awakes, he will be satisfied. He not only has God's favor now but eternal happiness then.

For the second, our posterity. It is true that people are much carried this way. They desire to advance their possessions and live gloriously in their posterity. Posterity is a shadow of eternity. Children are but a multiplied version of the father. When the father's time is up, then the baton is passed. His name and memory continue in the world through his children. Therefore, people would live on in their posterity and see their family flourish. But this is a sad exchange—forsaking heaven so that our children may enjoy the world. It often happens that the father goes to hell for amassing wealth, and the son goes to hell for squandering it. Though they may have an ample inheritance, they do not know who will ultimately benefit from it. "Who knows whether he will be wise or a fool?" (Eccl. 2:19). A person has no knowledge of future events, nor does he have any power over them.

So, as you see, we have no reason to envy worldly people. We have a covenantal relationship that surpasses all else. He is our God (Isa. 46:4). Though we might not leave our posterity great wealth, we do leave them God, who has made promises to us and our families.

CHAPTER 22

A Call to Prudence

We must be careful not to seek blessedness elsewhere. Carnal people think that happiness is found in surrendering to their lusts and living as they please. This is the lowest form of bondage. "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage" (2 Peter 2:19). They are entangled in snares and held in chains. Their work is drudgery, and their reward is death. Is this a happy life? It only increases their misery and paves the way for more shame. Yet carnal people are fascinated by this kind of life. They wonder how others can renounce the pleasures of this world. "They think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation" (1 Peter 4:4). They consider themselves very wise in following the counsels of their own hearts and doing as those who are like them. In truth, they only make themselves more accountable to God's justice.

Worldly comforts cannot make us happy. "Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes" (Eccl. 7:29). When people are separated from God, they never return on their own but wander endlessly and exhaust themselves with their own inventions. Like a traveler who has lost his way, they turn this way and that, not knowing where to settle. So, all efforts are in vain until God guides us. We should follow God's counsel, not the counsel of the ungodly. "You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Ps. 73:24). The Lord is willing to guide us (Ps. 25:8). He is too wise to be deceived and too good to deceive. Those who grow weary of wandering and are willing to submit themselves to God will never lack a guide.

Creatures cannot make us happy. Such is the restlessness of the soul that we constantly seek change. Nothing can make us happy except a complete relief from sin and misery. Here is rest for our souls. The foundation is laid in justification and sanctification. Here is our reconciliation with God, and hereafter is our advancement.

CHAPTER 23

A Call to Holiness

The blessed hope is an invitation to the practice of holiness. It is also a great motive. David begins his psalms with it (Ps. 1:1), as does Christ His sermons (Matt. 5:3). There is enough in it to alleviate the sorrows of the present life and fulfill the desires of the life to come. Everyone wants to be happy, but we must take the right course. We must behave ourselves as those who are called to it. This includes three practices.

First, we meditate on the happiness that is stored up for us, and we warm ourselves with thoughts of it. The mind meditates on happiness. Hence, our minds should be focused on our blessed hope. "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2).

Second, we discuss it with others. "Comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18) in the face of all the challenges and dangers of this life. How worldly and dull is our conversation! "He who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth" (John 3:31).

Third, we live accordingly. "You know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:11–12). We make eternity our aim. "We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). There should be a greater alignment between our hopes and our lives. We must behave ourselves as those who are invested in this blessed hope. We should not be discouraged by every hardship or overcome by every temptation. This is not fitting for our hope. Rather, we should demonstrate our interest in it by the heavenly and courageous nature of our spirits.

CHAPTER 24

Looking for Christ

We are to look for the blessed hope. Our blessedness will be complete when our bodies and souls are glorified, which will happen at the time of Christ's glorious appearing.

The person who must appear is Christ, described as "our great God and Savior" (Titus 2:13). These attributes of power and mercy are often combined in Scripture. The nature of His appearance is glorious—the manifestation of the glory of the great God. Paul contrasts the second coming of Christ with His first coming. The first was humble and modest while the second will be full of glory. But what does this glorious appearing mean? Some speculate about His personal reign before His judgment, but that is mere speculation. The Scriptures only acknowledge two comings (Heb. 9:28). After He offered Himself and ascended into heaven, taking His seat at the right hand of God, Christ was no longer physically present on earth. But will He not come in the clouds for a brief period to convert the Jews and restore order in

the world? Will He not appear for a short time and then vanish? Some people might believe this, and therefore distinguish between His “appearing” and “coming,” but there is no biblical basis for this distinction. The terms “appearing” and “coming” are used interchangeably (Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2). Therefore, this appearing is His coming in judgment. This is what we must anticipate.

It is, therefore, the duty of God’s children to look for Christ’s second coming in judgment. There are two choice Scriptures that describe the communion of the church with Christ and the dispensations of Christ to the church, and they both conclude with a desire for His coming. The first is the Song of Solomon, which describes the church’s communion with Christ. It concludes: “Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices” (Song 8:14). The second is the book of Revelation, which describes God’s providences to the church. It concludes: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20).

Christ is not slack in keeping His promise, but the church’s affections are strong and vehement. The seeming delay in His return is caused by the earnestness of our desire. Those who long for the world do not desire Christ’s coming, nor do they love His appearing. But the faithful desire His return. “Make haste, my beloved.” Christ says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” The church receives the words from Christ’s mouth. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” The Spirit of the Head is in all His

members, and therefore they speak the same thing and long for the same thing. Christ speaks in a way proper to Himself: "Surely I am coming quickly." And the church speaks in a way proper to herself: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" He speaks by way of promise, and we speak by way of supplication. Christ's voice and the church's voice are harmonious. Here is Christ's proclamation: "Surely I am coming quickly." And here is the church's acclamation: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" Christ says, "I am coming," because He desires our company. The church says, "Come, Lord Jesus," because we desire His company. And so, we are taught to pray in the Lord's Prayer: "Your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10).

The day of judgment is the most imperial act of Christ's kingly office, and therefore we do not only pray for its beginning at present but also for its consummation. The saints are described as those who look for a Savior. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). Paul speaks in his own name and in the name of all who are like him: "We eagerly wait." The saints are always waiting for the good hour of their promotion when Christ will come, that He may lead them to everlasting glory. We not only look for it but long for it. We love His appearing. "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"

(2 Tim. 4:8). It is noteworthy that Paul does not mention any other marks or characteristics. He simply describes them by their love for Christ's appearing. This is an essential characteristic of the saints, for it indicates the disposition of their hearts.

CHAPTER 25

Our Desires

There are several reasons why looking for Christ's glorious appearing is the duty and property of all God's children. The first is the disposition of our hearts. Faith, hope, and love foster a desire for Christ's return. The Holy Spirit stirs up desires and begets holy motions in our hearts. This disposition is above nature. The voice of corrupt human nature is this: "Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways" (Job 21:14). That is the language of carnal people, who are of the mind of the devil. When Christ cast out the demons, thereby revealing His divine power, they cried, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" (Matt. 8:29). The devil cannot endure to hear of Christ's coming; neither can carnal men, for they are of his mind.

If a criminal had the liberty to choose whether there would be a trial, do you think he would long for the judge's coming? So, corrupt nature has no desire for this day. It is the Holy Spirit who says through the bride,

"Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). As soon as the Spirit of grace works in us, there is an inclination this way. He "has begotten us again to a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3). Spiritual desires come from heaven, and they move us in the same direction. As soon as the Holy Spirit works grace in our hearts, we look in the direction from which we received it. The great work of the Holy Spirit is to bring Christ and us together. He comes from the Father and the Son to bring us to the Father by the Son. For this reason, He produces a holy groan in us: "When will He come?"

Faith looks to Christ's coming. The ground of this looking is God's promise. Faith waits for the promise as if it were already accomplished. Faith is "the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). It looks upon Christ as if He were already on His way, and this makes the soul ready to meet Him and receive Him. As a loving wife looks for the return of her husband who has traveled abroad, so faith waits for the coming of Christ.

Love also looks to Christ's coming. We have not seen Him, but we love Him (1 Peter 1:8). At present we do not know Christ by sight but by a picture in the Word and the sacraments. Therefore, we long for His appearing. Whoever is a friend to Christ will find his heart longing for Him. Love is an affection of union, meaning it desires to meet the object of its love. Love to Christ is not satisfied with the present state, but it cries out, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). It longs to see Him whose sweetness

it has already tasted. This love is not only kindled by the knowledge we have of Him but by experience. Christ first comes into our hearts by grace, and then, having tasted its sweetness, we long for another coming. When will He come in the clouds so that we may see Him as He is?

Finally, hope looks to Christ's coming. The Lord does not only provide a glorious estate for us but grace to expect it. He stirs up affections in us suitable to the glorious estate. He does not only provide heaven and happiness for us but hope that we may look for this happiness. He "has begotten us again to a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3). We "wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:10). Hope was made so that we may expect our full and future happiness. When the affection of hope is placed elsewhere and turned to carnal things, it is like a bone out of joint. It was framed so that we might look for this glorious appearing of Christ.

CHAPTER 26

Our Privileges

Another reason why looking for Christ's glorious appearing is the duty and property of all God's children is found in our privileges on that day.

Christ is our Master and Husband. As our Master, we anticipate His coming. It is the duty of a good servant to wait for the arrival of their master (Matt. 24:46). A servant of God should remember that Christ will not come empty-handed. He is a kind and generous Master. But there is an even sweeter relationship between Christ and us. We are not only to anticipate Him as a Master but as a Husband. The bride says, "Come!" (Rev. 22:17). Currently, we are engaged to Christ, and He has made a promise to us. But the day of judgment is the day of solemn marriage vows. "I will betroth you to Me forever" (Hos. 2:19). In the covenant of grace, Christ has made a promise to the church. He comes to give a pledge to us and to take a pledge from us. He has taken the pledge of our flesh from us and has gone to heaven to prepare everything, leaving us the pledge of His Spirit. This is so

that we may long for the time when He will come again to consummate this joyful marriage between Him and us. We are to wait for glory like a servant waits for his master and like a bride for her husband. When Christ comes, we will enjoy numerous privileges.

A Day of Manifestation

“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19). At present everything is under a veil—our Christ, our life, and our glory. Moreover, our persons are hidden under obscurity and humiliation. “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:3–4). Once the night of death is passed, and we awake out of the dust of the grave, then Christ will appear in all His royalty and glory as the great God and Savior of the world. At that time the adopted sons will be manifested. We will put on our best robes, and we will be appareled with glory, even as Christ is. In winter, the tree does not show what it is because the life and sap are hidden in the root. But when summer comes, everything is revealed. So, at present, a Christian is under a veil, but on this great day everything will be manifested.

A Day of Perfection

We see the tiny seed that lies underground. Eventually, it breaks through the dirt and begins to grow. But it has

not yet flowered. Likewise, grace awaits its perfection. At that time, we will enjoy perfect holiness and perfect freedom. Christ will be a perfect Savior to the glorified saints. Currently, Christ is but a Savior in part. He makes our souls perfect, but our bodies are still subject to death, which is the fruit of sin. But on that day, the body and soul will be reunited, and they will be perfectly glorified that we might praise God in the heavens. The purpose of Christ's coming is to complete His work of redemption. At His first coming, He redeemed our souls by breaking the power of sin, but when He comes again, He will redeem our bodies from the grave and from the power of corruption.

The Scriptures speak as if all our privileges in Christ are imperfect until that day. Regeneration, adoption, justification, and redemption suffer a kind of imperfection until then. (1) Regeneration will be perfected. Christ proclaims, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). At that time, all things will be made new. Heaven and earth will be new. Our souls and bodies will be new. (2) Adoption will be perfected. We are "eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). What does Paul mean? As soon as we are implanted into Christ, are we not the sons of God? Yes, but we have not yet entered into our inheritance. "Beloved, now we are

children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be" (1 John 3:2). (3) Justification will be perfected. "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). Our pardon will be proclaimed in the ears of the whole world, and we will receive absolution from Christ's own mouth. We will understand fully what it means when the Lord says, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Heb. 8:12). (4) Redemption will be perfected. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). Oh, we long for that day! Our souls are already set at liberty, but our bodies are held under the chains of death. But on that day, Christ will loosen the shackles of the grave and free the bodies of the saints. He will set us fully at liberty.

This privilege of perfection awaits the saints. We will be acquitted before the whole world and crowned with Christ's own hands.

A Day of Congregation

The saints are now scattered, living in various places, and they do not enjoy the comfort of one another's society. But when Christ appears, all of them will meet in one assembly. Christ's church will be gathered in one place. Just as the stars do not shine in a cluster but are dispersed throughout the firmament for the light of the

world, so the saints are scattered throughout the world according to how they might be useful for God. But on that day, the saints will be gathered from all over the world into a great congregation.

In this life, we cannot enjoy one another's fellowship because God has a service for us in various countries. But the time will come when we make but one body. The saints long for that happy day. This is true of the saints on earth, who still struggle with sin and misery, and it is true of the saints in heaven, who cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true?" (Rev. 6:10). Those who suffer shipwreck and make it to shore watch for their companions. Similarly, glorified saints, who have made it safely to shore, look forward to the time when the body of Christ will be made perfect, and all the saints will meet in one assembly. This is the communion between the saints above and the saints below. They long for our company as we long for theirs. Here the wheat and weeds are mingled, but then they will be separated, and the saints will be gathered together and sit as judges, giving their vote with Christ in the condemnation of the wicked.

A Day of Glorification

The saints long for the day when Christ will be honored and receive a glorious name. Christ will display the fullness of His majesty, the terror of His wrath, and the glory of His justice. He shows His majesty every day, but we do not have eyes to see it. Our eyes are blinded by

worldly splendor, but on that day all illusions will disappear. The saints, who love the glory of God, cannot help but long for that time when Christ will be seen in all His glory, when God will no longer be dishonored, and the kingdom of sin and Satan will come to an end. At that time, God will have perfect glory in the saints and from the saints. This is the comfort of God's children, that God is glorified in their glory so that they may live to praise Him forever without weakness or distraction. They delight in their own glorious state because they will always have the ability to bring glory to God. Moreover, God will be glorified in all His plans and decrees, in the wisdom of His providence and in the course of His judgments, for on the day of judgment the full history of the world will be presented to the saints, whereas now we only see it in fragments.

CHAPTER 27

Our Benefits

Another reason why looking for Christ's glorious appearing as the duty and property of all God's children is found in the benefits we receive in the present.

First, it encourages us to live a heavenly life. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). We should focus our thoughts and desires on heaven, where Christ is.

Second, it motivates us to be faithful in our relationships. There will come a day when we will be held accountable for our duties in our relationships. Paul urges Timothy to fulfill his responsibilities as a minister in the church and as a leader in his family (2 Tim. 4:5). Our relationships are not accidental but are under God's providential care; therefore, we will be answerable for them. This applies to all relationships, including those of magistrates, ministers, masters, and servants.

Third, it brings peace to our hearts amid the trials and troubles of this life. "When He was reviled, [He]

did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). We are to follow Christ's example. When we face difficulty and injustice in the world, we should commit ourselves to God, knowing that He will judge all things in the end.

Fourth, it motivates us to persevere. If we have been following an oppressed cause for a long time without seeing any results, we might grow weary. However, if we follow Christ faithfully, we will be rewarded for our efforts. As stated in 1 John 2:28, we are to abide in Christ so "that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him." Christ will come with salvation for those who eagerly await Him. Therefore, let us be faithful in our duties.

Even the least saint has some inclination in this regard. If a person desires for Christ to come into their heart, then they will also desire Him to come in judgment, since comfort and reward are more naturally embraced than duty. The very first work of grace is to generate this hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). There might be times of drowsiness when our lamps are not kept burning (Luke 12:36). If we have fallen asleep, we might temporarily wish that Christ would not come and find us in such a condition. Careless behavior

weakens hope. Even so, there is still a disposition toward this desire, which begins with the new birth. A wife desires her husband's return home, but it may be that not everything is in order as it should be. Similarly, all Christians desire the coming of Christ, but sometimes they may not be as diligent and watchful, resulting in less fervent affections. Drowsiness creeps into their hearts, and then God awakens them through afflictions.

CHAPTER 28

Earnest Looking

Some people would rejoice in their hearts to hear that Christ will never come. It is their burden and torment to think of His coming. Such people have the spirit of the devil in them. If they had the Spirit of God, they would not think like this. But we look earnestly for Christ's coming.

Before He came in the flesh, His delight was in us. "My delight was with the sons of men" (Prov. 8:31). And now in heaven, He longs to be with us. "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me" (Rev. 22:12). The angels expect it. "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). The saints long for it. "How long, O LORD?" (Ps. 13:1). The demons tremble at the thought of it. "Have You come here to torment us before the time?" (Matt. 8:29). The creation waits for it. "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19).

“Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Heb. 9:28). This earnest looking implies three things.

First, it implies strong faith. Reason says it might be, but faith says it will be. Our reward might be delayed, but it will not be abolished or removed. Faith says Christ will come, and we have His Word for it. Christ is contracted to us, and He will come to marry us. He loved us so much as to come from heaven to earth to take our nature to Himself. And will He not come in glory? We have His Spirit, and we enjoy His ordinances as a memorial until He comes, and we have many tokens of His love sent to us as a pledge that He will come again.

Second, earnest looking implies longing desires. Our hearts should leap within us when we hear of Christ's coming. “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). Abraham rejoiced to think that a son should come from his loins in whom all the world would be blessed. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them” (Heb. 11:13). The patriarchs hugged the promises! So too should we.

Third, earnest looking implies frequent thoughts. Every time we look to heaven, we should think of Christ who is there. Whenever we see the clouds, we should think of Christ's coming. These clouds were chariots by

which Christ went triumphantly into heaven, and in like manner He will come again. We are called to lift up our hearts to heaven, from where we expect a Savior. There is our treasure.

It is good to see how we are affected by Christ's appearing. Nothing can provide true contentment to Christians in this world. Do we look beyond it? Where is the bent of our hearts? A person who anticipates the arrival of a king to his house will prepare accordingly. Surely, you cannot expect Him if you do not prepare yourself to welcome Him. If the house is messy, are you really expecting important guests? What should we do to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ?

First, we must examine ourselves. "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Cor. 13:5). By examining ourselves, we anticipate God's action.

Second, we must abide in Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Those who are in Christ have no reason to fear God's judgment. We can rely on Christ's righteousness to counter His judgment. Guilty criminals do not desire the presence of the judge. Are you in the condition in which you would like to be found by Him? "Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14).

Third, we must live a disciplined life. We are living between Christ's first and second comings. Let us live soberly, righteously, and godly. How do we entertain Christ in our hearts and in His ordinances? Can a person disregard His ordinances and still hope for His coming? A woman who never cares to hear from her husband cannot be said to desire his arrival. Similarly, if Christ has frequently knocked at the door of our hearts and we refuse to welcome Him, how can we be said to anticipate His appearing?

CHAPTER 29

A Glorious Preparation

I proceed to the manner of Christ's appearing. His coming to judgment will be very glorious. To begin with, it will be glorious in terms of the preparation for His arrival. The Scriptures mention two things that will precede Christ's coming.

The Trumpet of the Archangel

There will be a great noise which will create fear in the world. It is managed by the archangel, although the power comes from God. This great noise startles the dead in their graves and summons the whole world to appear before Christ's tribunal. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16). "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:31). Some people interpret this trumpet analogically while others interpret

it literally. Analogically, they believe it signifies the power and authority of Christ by which all the dead are awakened from their sleep and forced to appear before His tribunal. They say it is expressed as a trumpet because the solemn assemblies of Israel were traditionally summoned by such a sound. But why not understand it literally as the audible sound of a trumpet? Just as the sound of the trumpet was extremely loud at the giving of the law, so there is the sound of a trumpet when Christ comes to judge, to demand an account of the fulfillment of the law. This is, in a way, a terrifying summons to the whole world and a sign of His coming.

At His first coming, Christ had His forerunner, John the Baptist, proclaiming in the wilderness, "The kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). At His second coming, Christ has His forerunner, an archangel, who will sound a trumpet. This makes His coming glorious because it will awaken the whole world. This sound will be heard by the dead all over the world. "There was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them" (Ezek. 37:7-8). So, there will be such a noise among the bones when Christ comes to judge. Here in the church, God speaks in a quieter voice through His messengers who sound the trumpet for spiritual battle. They play the pipe, but few dance, until by His mighty power, He raises sinners from the dead.

Similarly, on the last day, God has His messengers. There is the archangel who is responsible for the ministerial awakening, and the mighty power of God accompanies it to make the dead come alive and awaken them from sleep.

The Sign of the Son of Man

“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30). We cannot be certain what the sign is until it is revealed through experience. However, it must be something that will make the world aware of His coming. Some people believe it will be a strange star, similar to the one that appeared at His first coming. But this is only speculation. Others suppose it will be the sign of the cross appearing in the heavens, as it is Christ’s symbol that was known in the world. The central theme of the gospel is Christ crucified, which is why it is called the “word of the cross.” Therefore, they believe that the sign of the cross will be impressed upon the heavens for all the world to see. The cross, which is now a scandal and offense to the world, will then become His royal standard impressed upon the heavens. Just as kings have their banner carried before them during a triumphant parade, Christ will have His cross, which is the sign of the Son of Man. That might be the case, but I would not dare to be dogmatic in asserting this point.

Other people (and I include myself among them) interpret the sign as some beams of majesty and glory that will darken the sun and moon, causing fear in people's hearts. The glory of Christ, described as passing through the heavens like lightning, will be like the morning beams before the sun rises. Paul "saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around [him]" (Acts 26:13). It is worth noting that these preparations and beams of majesty are sometimes represented as light and other times as fire. They are represented as light to convey comfort to the godly. They are like the light of the sun, which does not scorch but refreshes, revives, and cheers. However, at other times, they are depicted as fire (2 Thess. 1:8) to illustrate the dreadfulness of His appearance to the wicked. The sign of the Son of Man will bring comfort to the godly, but it will be like a flame of fire (dreadful and formidable) to the wicked, whose final judgment draws near.

CHAPTER 30

A Glorious Presentation

Second, the manner of Christ's appearing will be glorious in terms of His presentation. This is due to the dignity of His person. He will come in "great glory" (Matt. 24:30) and "in the glory of His Father" (Matt. 16:27). He will come as God's own natural Son with such a glory that cannot be communicated to any creature. His first coming was mean and lowly, but His second coming will be glorious.

Great glory will be put upon the saints (Matt. 13:43; 2 Thess. 1:10), but we do not come in the glory of the Father. When we are glorified, we are not deified. Yet our glory will be so great that humans and angels will wonder at what God has done for us. But Christ is God and man in one person, and this mystery will be discovered to the utmost when He appears. Therefore, He must have a glory of which no creature is capable. He does not only appear as "our Savior" but as "our great God" (Titus 2:13).

We can guess at what it will mean by considering other appearances of God. When Christ came to give

the law, His voice shook Mount Sinai, causing Moses to tremble (Heb. 12:21). We can also guess at it by the light that came from heaven at the time of Christ's birth. It shone around the shepherds, causing them to be exceedingly afraid (Luke 2:9). Another glimpse of His divine glory is given in His transfiguration. "His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matt. 17:2). It caused His disciples to fall upon their faces. We can also guess at what it will mean by Christ's appearance to Paul. He saw a great light and then was struck blind for three days (Acts 9:3, 9). Lastly, the terror that Isaiah felt when he saw God in a vision can also give us an idea of what is to come. "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). It was terrible and formidable to him because of his remaining corruption. But Christ's glory, even though it will be very great, will be comforting to the saints, for sin and weakness will be taken away.

Christ is a judge of the entire world, and therefore He will come with all things that are fitting for such a judge. He will sit upon a visible throne where He may be seen and heard by all. In earthly courts, when criminals are brought to trial, the entire majesty and splendor of the nation is on display. The judge enters in splendid attire, accompanied by the elite of the country (nobles and gentlemen) and a large crowd of people to make it

even more magnificent. Similarly, Christ, the judge of the entire world, will come as befits His position, sitting upon a throne of glory and majesty. "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31–32). The whole world will be summoned before Him.

CHAPTER 31

A Glorious Company

We are considering the manner of Christ's appearing. We have observed that it will be glorious in terms of preparation and presentation. In addition, the appearance of Christ's attendants (angels and saints) will make it glorious.

The Angels

Multitudes of angels will come with Christ (Matt. 25:31). When an earthly prince moves, the whole court moves with him. So, when Christ moves out of heaven, the entire court of heaven moves with Him. All the angels will come with Christ so that they can be present at this great event. Just as they were present at the giving of the law, they will be present when the sentence of the law is executed. Christ created all thrones, principalities, powers, and dominions. He is their head, and they were given to Him by His Father to serve Him in His mediatorial office. Therefore, Christ always employs angels.

At His birth, an angel came to Mary, and a host of angels came down to announce the good news of salvation. In His passion, an angel comforted Him. At His resurrection, angels were present at the tomb. At His ascension, angels carried Him to heaven. Christ utilizes angels more than we realize in the governance of the church. These principalities and powers engage with the church, and on the last day He will come with His holy angels. I do not dispute whether these angels will appear visibly. Certainly, the purpose of their presence with Christ is to make His appearance more majestic. Those who attended Christ at His ascension will now attend Him at His second coming. Christ will come like a royal king in the midst of His nobles.

Another reason the angels will come with Christ is because He assigns tasks for them to perform. "They will gather together His elect from the four winds" (Matt. 24:31). The angels love to be involved with the saints. The angels escort the souls of those who die in the Lord to heaven (Luke 16:22). Likewise, they will be engaged in bringing their bodies out of the grave. This is the final act of love that they can perform for them, and they do it willingly. As for the wicked, the angels' task is to force them into Christ's presence and to bind them up like weeds for the fire (Matt. 13:40–41). Moreover, the angels serve as witnesses. They currently observe our behavior. That is why the apostle discusses inappropriate gestures. "For this reason the woman ought to have a

symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels" (1 Cor. 11:10). They are privy to our conversations and able to give an account of our lives. They watch our conduct so that they may give an account to God. As soon as the sentence is pronounced, it will be executed.

For the benefit of our understanding, God represents His work as being done through the ministry of angels. We can better comprehend the actions of an angel than the actions of almighty God because angels are closer to us in their existence and are of a finite essence.

The Saints

The saints are also Christ's attendants. Some will come from heaven with Him while others will be "caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). This greatly contributes to the glory of the day because, when Christ appears, we appear with Him in glory. We will be like Him, and we will suddenly attain to that fullness of glory that our hearts could never conceive. What a glorious day it will be when so many suns will meet together! Each one of the elect will shine brighter than the sun. Then, our spiritual empire and dominion will begin. We will come to share with Christ in the glory of His kingdom, to be associated with Him in judging the world.

We do not please ourselves with fantasies of temporal happiness. "The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning" (Ps. 49:14). When is this? After

they have slept the sleep of death, then God's saints, who are presently scorned, censured, and persecuted, will have dominion. In the morning of the resurrection, when we awaken to meet Christ, then our glory begins. We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. But if we look at all the descriptions of the last judgment, we will find this pattern: the sentence begins with the godly, but the execution begins with the wicked. The books are opened, the godly are called, and they are acquitted first so that afterward they may join with Christ in judging the world (1 Cor. 6:2). "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46). Through others' misery, we will be more aware of our own felicity.

CHAPTER 32

A Glorious Accomplishment

The fourth thing that will make Christ's appearing "glorious" is His powerful execution of His work. He will gather the wicked together, dragging them out of their graves with horror. Then, He will enlarge their consciences so that they will remember all their actions. Afterward, He will cast them into eternal darkness and chase them with the glory of His presence into hell. They "said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!'" (Rev. 6:16). They will be ashamed to look Christ in the face because they have rejected, despised, and neglected Him in this world. They will be ashamed to see the godly welcomed. They will depart from Christ's presence, yelling and howling. They will be led away to their final state. Christ achieves the most glorious conquest over His enemies. He shows Himself to be the King, punishing His enemies and rewarding His friends.

As for punishing His enemies, their stubborn knees will bow to Him. "I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath" (Isa. 45:23). This is a prediction of Christ's sovereignty, and it is solidified by an oath. God's holiness and glory are at stake to ensure its fulfillment.

This prophecy is mentioned twice in the New Testament. The first instance is Philippians 2:10–11, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Immediately upon Christ's ascension, God bestowed upon Him this power, as His ascension was His official inauguration into the role of King. Christ was chosen as King and anointed from all eternity. Though He was a King while He was in the world, it was only upon His ascension that He was crowned King.

God took it upon Himself to fulfill the prophecy that "every knee should bow" to Christ. However, some people argue that they do not see all things subjected to Him. There are demons who resist His counsel, and there are wicked people who rebel against His law. It does not seem as though every knee bows before Him and every tongue confesses that He is Lord. But we must wait a little longer for the work to be completed. Christ's royal office gains increasing glory and perfection until

the day of judgment when it will be revealed in the most spectacular way.

The prophesy is also mentioned in Romans 14:10–11, “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: ‘As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’” This implies that God’s promise will finally be fulfilled at the day of judgment.

This will be the consummate act of Christ’s regal office. Demons and wicked men will be made to surrender to Him. Christ’s kingdom is a growing kingdom, as stated in Isaiah 9:7, “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.” Not only will His government increase, but the increase of His government will reach its full strength. Hence, it is referred to as “the day of the Lord” (2 Peter 3:10). On that day, Christ will reveal Himself as Lord in all His majesty and greatness, causing His enemies to tremble before Him. He will also demonstrate Himself as a King to His people. “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’” (Matt. 25:34). Observe the special title given to Christ when He welcomes the saints into His embrace: “King.” At that time, we will receive the highest fulfillment of His kingly office.

CHAPTER 33

A Glorious Consequence

Finally, the manner of Christ's appearing will be glorious because of its impact. I will mention three consequences.

Judging the World

First, Christ will send all people to their eternal state: the elect to glory and the wicked to torment (Matt. 25:31–34). There will be no appeal. The sentence will be pronounced by Christ as God-man. On earth, God's sentence is often repealed. God may speak of the destruction of a nation, but free grace may intervene (Jer. 18:7–8). Although God does not change His decrees, He often changes His sentence. The sentence shows what could be, while the decree shows what will be. But Christ's sentence on the day of judgment will never be reversed. We live in the day of patience, but the day of recompense is coming.

The sentence will be swift. At present, the sentence is often passed, but "the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily" (Eccl. 8:11). But on that

day, Christ's sentence will begin immediately, and the wicked will be thrust into hell right before the eyes of the righteous (Matt. 13:30). When the wicked see others gathered into the great assembly while they themselves are cast out, it will compound their envy and sorrow. The righteous will enjoy a deeper understanding of their own condition. When opposites are put together, they illustrate one another. So, when we see the misery of the wicked, it will give us a greater appreciation of our deliverance in Christ.

The sentence will be eternal. It will be carried out against the whole person forever. "Go, you cursed." "Come, you blessed." Both body and soul partake in the reward and punishment, which remain forever. Why is it eternal? Because the reward is based on infinite merit, namely, the blood of Christ. Its virtue endures for all eternity to secure heaven for us. And the punishment is eternal because an infinite majesty has been offended. In short, God never tires of blessing the righteous and never tires of cursing the wicked, carrying out His judgment against them.

Surrendering the Kingdom

Second, Christ will give up the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24–28). This does not mean that He resigns His kingly office, for He still holds the government and wears the crown of honor as the Head of the church. But the term *kingdom* refers to the subjects of the kingdom.

Christ will present all the elect to God, giving them up as a prey snatched out of the mouth of the lion. This is referred to as the presentation of His spouse to God (Eph. 5:27). Christ has shed His blood, washed her clean, and adorned her with all the jewels of the covenant, and then He will present her to God. "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me" (Heb. 2:13). Not one of them will be missing. What a glorious sight it will be to see the great Shepherd of the sheep leading His flock into their everlasting folds, wearing their crowns of glory upon their heads, singing to the praise of the Lamb, "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55). They will triumph in the salvation of God. All their enemies will be gone, and they will settle in eternal dwellings. Oh, we should strive to be one of this number!

Purging the Creation

Third, Christ will renew His creation. At that time, fire will come from God and burn everything, even melting the firmament (2 Peter 3:10–12). Certainly, this fire should be taken literally as it is contrasted with the water that destroyed the world in Noah's day. But I do not believe that the world will be consumed by this fire but rather renewed and purged. In the eternal state, God will make all things new. He not only desires to have the bodies and souls of the saints made new but also the heavens and the earth. This is what Paul means when he

says that creation will be “delivered from the bondage of corruption” (Rom. 8:21).

Some people place this burning of the world before the day of judgment, but I believe it is a consequence. It seems to be an instrument of vengeance against the wicked. This is confirmed in 2 Peter 3:7, “But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” Some people say that this fire will initiate the day of judgment; the wicked will plead their case in flames. However, if this were the case, then the punishment would be executed before the sentence is passed.

Sodom’s fire was terrifying, but it cannot be compared to this burning. It was a dreadful sight when God rained hell out of heaven and people ran screaming and yelling because of the fire and brimstone. But this fire will come from the throne of the Lord. “A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him” (Dan. 7:10). It will consume His adversaries and remain with them in hell forever. God has a deluge of fire just as He had a deluge of water. God will not tolerate impurity in the eternal state. The world will be purged by fire.

And thus, we have seen how glorious the appearance of Christ will be!

CHAPTER 34

Christ's Glory

Why will Christ's appearance be so glorious? First, it will compensate for His humiliation at His first coming. He came on a donkey, but then He will come in the clouds—His royal chariot. He came with fishermen, a few apostles to be His messengers, but then He will come with angels. He came in the form of a servant to be judged, but then He will come as the Son of God to be the judge of the world. When the day of judgment is mentioned, Christ is referred to as the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13; Matt. 25:31; 26:64). Why? He who was the Son of Man, who came in such a humble state, will then be glorious, and so it will remove the scandal of His former condition. He who appeared in such a lowly state, who was betrayed, crucified, pierced, and buried, will then be crowned with glory and honor. When He came to teach us righteousness, He came as the Son of Man, but when He comes to reward righteousness, He will come as the Son of God.

Second, Christ's appearance will be glorious to demonstrate that He is free from sin. The glory bestowed upon His human nature by God the Father indicates His complete absolution as our surety. We hear that He is taken up into glory, that God has acquitted Him, that "He was taken from prison and from judgment" (Isa. 53:8). But then, we will see it with our own eyes when the Father sends Him from heaven with power and glory. At first, Christ came like a man, burdened with sin, in the likeness of a sinner. God sent "His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3). But "He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Heb. 9:28). At His first coming, the world regarded Him as one who was abandoned and afflicted by God. But He will come as one who is honored by God. His second coming will make it clear that He is released from the debt He took upon Himself. The apostle does not say that those who look for Him will be without sin, but that He will be without sin. The absolution of our surety is sufficient, and it is a sign that the debt is paid.

Third, Christ's appearance is glorious so that He may be a pledge and cause of our glory. His first coming was in humility, for we fell because of pride. He came to redeem us; therefore, He came humbly and lowly in the form of a servant, as one who came to suffer. There is also His spiritual coming into the heart to sanctify us. It is with great power but hidden. But when He comes to glorify us, His coming will match His work in that it will

be visible in power and glory. "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). Christ must be glorified first, and then us.

Fourth, Christ's appearance is glorious because He comes to bring us to heaven in a more glorious manner. He does not send for us but comes in person. "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3). As a bridegroom comes with the youth and beauty of the city to bring his bride in grandeur, so Christ brings the beauty of heaven, all His holy angels, to escort us in splendor to our eternal homes.

Fifth, Christ's appearance is glorious so that all creatures may behold His glory in its entirety. Humans and angels were created for this purpose, to witness the glory of Christ. It was partially revealed during the resurrection. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). However, that was only a private and concealed declaration to the Jews. And when it was proclaimed to the world in the gospel, many did not believe. We have the spiritual evidence of it through faith but not through sense and sight. But then, the personal union will fully and undeniably appear. He will be declared to be the great God.

Sixth, Christ's appearance is glorious because He will have complete victory over His enemies. Some of His enemies are still allowed to exist for our growth. Satan is not yet destroyed. Demons are restrained by

the unbreakable chains of providence, and they will then be brought before Christ. "And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). They anticipate a greater judgment and terror (Matt. 8:29). Angels will come forth as Christ's companions, while demons will be His prisoners. The saints will judge both angels and humans (1 Cor. 6:3). Christ will have His people place their feet upon the necks of their enemies. Although demons now tempt, trouble, and harass the saints for their growth, then the saints will triumph over them as they are brought as captives into Christ's presence.

CHAPTER 35

An Exhortation

From all that has been said, we learn that humility is indeed the way to glory. We learn this from Christ's two comings. He came in a humble manner, and He will come in a glorious manner. The demons aspired to greatness, desiring to be great but not good. They set a bad example for us, but Christ came to set a better one. He did not come from heaven to teach us how to create worlds and perform miracles but to teach us how to be humble and lowly. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29). The path to spiritual advancement is to see ourselves as low and insignificant.

We also learn that we should be patient in times of humiliation. Christ is willing to remain hidden for a while, not revealing His full glory until the end of the world. In His earthly sojourn, He was trampled upon by wicked people. Even now, He is despised in His gospel, His cause, and His followers, even though He Himself is beyond reproach. But He is content to wait until the day

of revelation when He will appear in all His glory. We should do likewise.

Comfort for the Godly

For the godly, Christ's appearance will be glorious but not terrible. It will be light but not fire. The trumpet will sound, but it will summon us to be crowned. The sign of the Son of Man will show that our Lord has come. Certainly, those who have an interest in Him will not be afraid of Him. His angels are our guardians, and His saints are our companions. His appearance will be to pronounce our pardon. A crown will be set upon our heads in the face of the world. Christ will come as God but still as a man, as our brother. If He is glorious, it is for our sake, that we might be like Him. He will come as a pattern of our glory.

Terror for the Ungodly

This ought to be a terror to those who lie in their sins. How can they hear of these things without astonishment? You who despise the voice of God when He speaks to you by the angel of the church, what will you do when you hear the great trumpet that will be a call to death and execution? Your avenger has come! Christ's sign is not a light but a terror for you. If you do not tremble, you are worse than Felix, for he trembled when he heard of the judgment to come (Acts 24:25). Those who do not tremble are worse than Satan, for the demons fear and tremble (James 2:19). Carnal people scoff at that which

causes demons to tremble. Should you not tremble at the great trumpet that will awaken the dead? Oh, seek sanctuary in God's grace!

Advice for All

Christ's glorious appearing is a good check to sin as it prevents the boiling of the pot. When you are in the midst of your lusts, remember that "for all these God will bring you into judgment" (Eccl. 11:9). Whenever you sin, you enter into a competition with Christ, as if you were stronger than He is. But can you grapple with Christ? Surely not. This, then, is a call to repentance. When Jacob heard that Esau was coming with a great force against him, he sought to make peace with him. You have heard that Christ comes in a glorious manner and that He will be terrible to His enemies. Therefore, you must reconcile all differences between you and Him. Make peace with Him! "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Christ's glorious appearing is also useful to make you steadfast in walking in the fear of the Lord. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14). We should keep His commandments. "Keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus

Christ's appearing" (1 Tim. 6:14). We should also be diligent in serving Him. He comes with crowns in His hands to reward all who are faithful to Him (1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4). Christ's servants must give an account. Whatever position He has placed us in, He expects us to be faithful. We are, therefore, to consider what we must do.

CHAPTER 36

Greatness and Goodness

We now come to the description of the person who will appear. He is described by a title of power and a title of mercy. Greatness and goodness are mixed in Christ's person. He is called "our great God" (Titus 2:13). Here is His power and majesty. And He is called "our Savior." Here is comfort. Both titles belong to the same person. In the original there is but one article. There is a similar expression in 1 Corinthians 15:24, "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father," that is, to God, even the Father. In our verse, the words "our great God and Savior" describe God who is the Savior. There is another reason why these words must refer to the same person: the Bible never speaks of the Father appearing but only Christ. Therefore, the appearance of "our great God" must refer to Christ.

In this title we have words of power and words of mercy coupled together. This is often the case in Scripture. Why?

First, it comforts the saints. It shows that Christ, in all His glory, is a Savior. At the day of judgment, when He comes forth like the great God with all His heavenly train, He will own us, and He will be as tender toward us as He was upon the cross. We may have boldness on the great day, for He will not only come as "our great God" but as "our Savior" (Titus 2:13). We have a similar expression in Hebrews 8:1-2, "We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." What follows? He is "a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle." Christ received a gracious welcome into heaven, and He was exalted by the Father. But even now, He is our faithful representative in heaven. He came in the form of a servant, in the fashion of an ordinary man, poor and despicable. He came to serve the church. And now, He has gone to heaven in all His glory. Yet, He is still there as a servant, as one who offers our prayers to the Lord and passes His blessings to us. This is Christ's employment in heaven.

Second, it demonstrates the mystery of Christ's person, in whom the two natures converge. There is not only the majesty of the Godhead but also the human nature through which He relates to us. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). What a combination of titles!

He is referred to as “a Child,” yet He is the “Everlasting Father.” He is called “Wonderful,” yet also the “Counselor.” He is called “Mighty God,” and then immediately the “Prince of Peace.” Christ’s person is the greatest mystery in the world. He is God and man. He is, as the apostle says, “without father, without mother” (Heb. 7:3). He was without a mother in terms of His divinity and without a father in terms of His humanity. Another passage where the same pattern is observed is Zechariah 13:7, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion.” Here He is called “the Man,” but God still refers to Him as His “Companion.”

There are so many mysteries that converge in Christ’s person that under the law He could not be symbolized and represented by just one sacrifice. Two sacrifices were chosen to represent Christ: the slain goat and the scapegoat (Lev. 16:15, 21). One was not enough because He has two natures—God who could not die, and man who could not overcome death. The goat that was slain showed that He was crucified in the flesh, and the goat that was released showed that He lived by the power of God (2 Cor. 13:4; 1 Peter 3:18). There was His human nature so that He could die to fulfill the role of the slain goat. And there was His divine nature so that He could live and triumph over death.

Third, it shows that Christ does not forget His old work. His first coming was in humility, to save, not to judge (John 12:47; 1 John 4:14). However, His second

coming will be in greater majesty. He will come as God to judge. Considering Him as a severe judge would make our hearts tremble but considering Him as a Savior is comforting. In short, He is our great God and Savior to demonstrate His dual role and purpose on the last day. He is our Savior when He comes to reveal Himself as our great God and to punish the wicked who did not accept His grace and salvation.

CHAPTER 37

Fear and Love

In the last chapter, we noted three reasons why power and mercy are often coupled together in reference to Christ. Here is a fourth reason: to assure us of His willingness and ability to do us good. Christ is a mighty God, yet a Savior.

There is obviously a difference between God and us. When we pardon and do good, it is out of necessity because we dare not do otherwise. However, Christ is the mighty God, strong enough to take revenge; yet He is also our Savior, gracious enough to pardon. The combination of these words shows that Christ is not a Savior out of necessity but out of goodwill. People may spare their enemies out of strategy, not out of pity (2 Sam. 3:19). Power tends to make us cruel. "If a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely?" (1 Sam. 24:19). The weakest are usually the most compassionate and merciful. Why? They need pity and compassion from others. However, Christ, who possesses the greatest power, also has the greatest mercy and love. He is the

mighty God, yet the Prince of Peace. He would rather be a mighty God in saving than in destroying. Although He has all power in His hands, He will exercise it through acts of mercy. There cannot be a happier combination than when greatness and goodness, power and mercy, come together. It is a great comfort to know that Christ is "our great God and Savior" (Titus 2:13). He is both capable and willing to do us good and bestow abundant grace upon us.

When He reveals Himself as a Savior, He will also reveal Himself as a mighty God. In addition to acts of grace and favor, He will display acts of power and strength. There will be a simultaneous display of power and grace. The Scripture speaks of this. He forgives as a mighty God. "Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity?" (Mic. 7:18). In the original, the word for God is *el*, which means strength or power. "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex. 34:6-7). Moses clearly alludes to it in Numbers 14:17-18, "And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, 'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression.'" Whenever God shows grace by forgiving sin, He also displays His power by subduing sin. "God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God"

(Ps. 62:11). What immediately follows? “Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy” (v. 12).

Those who seek relief from God deal with a double trouble—disturbed emotions and a guilty conscience. Therefore, we must know for our comfort that mercy and power belong to God and that they are usually dispensed together. “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). If we come to God rightly, we come to Him not only for life, that we may be saved from destruction, but also for godliness. We come not only for acts of grace but also for acts of power. Just as wrath and power are appropriate for the ungodly, mercy and power are fitting for the godly.

To demonstrate that Christ is not only a desirable friend but also a formidable adversary, you must embrace Him as Savior or else you will find Him, to your detriment, to be a mighty God. You must surrender to Him or be destroyed by Him. You must accept His mercy or experience the power of His wrath. In Scripture, Christ is depicted with a golden scepter and an iron rod, symbolizing His ability to shatter His enemies like a potter’s vessel. You must either touch His golden scepter or bear the weight of His iron rod. He who saves can also punish and crush. While Christ offers mercy and compassion, He is also portrayed as a formidable adversary. Take note of the Lord’s counsel in Isaiah 27:5, “Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me.” Who is able to grasp and contend with God’s strength? Yet the

truth is, we overcome by surrendering. Therefore, let us humble ourselves in a timely manner, for that is what it means to take hold of His strength and make His power our friend.

We function best with a mixture of emotions. God wants us to not only love Him but fear Him. He is portrayed as a mighty God and a gracious Savior so that we may approach Him with reverence and confidence. This is the appropriate disposition of a gracious spirit in all our interactions with God. "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Ps. 2:11). Fear, when blended and tempered with love, is most proper. So too is love guided by fear. Therefore, when you pray to Him, worship Him, and serve Him, remember that He is the great God. Lest this produce dejection in your spirit, remember that He is also our Savior. It would be delightful if we could constantly remember both these titles whenever we approach Him. Our emotions should be as mixed as Christ's titles are. We should walk in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31). These go hand in hand—fearing God and rejoicing in God. Do not take a casual approach with the Savior and content yourselves with a superficial comfort when you neglect your duties and have no reverence for God. Likewise, do not indulge in legalistic despondency. The great God you revere is also your Savior. Thus, the titles of Christ are mixed to produce a sweet blend of fear and love.

CHAPTER 38

The Great God

Here is a compelling testimony to Christ's deity: He is the "great God" (Titus 2:13) together with the Father and the Spirit. He is called the "great God" partly in opposition to those who are "so-called gods" (1 Cor. 8:5–6), partly in opposition to those gods of our making (2 Cor. 4:4; Phil. 3:19), and partly in opposition to those magistrates who are called "gods" (Ps. 82:6). But the main reason why Christ is called "our great God" is to show that He is not inferior to the Father, thereby removing the scandal of His humiliation. He is not a God by gift or grant, but by nature He is equal in power, majesty, and glory to the Father. The work of the Mediator could not be carried out by an inferior agent.

Prophetic Office

Christ needed to be greater than all the prophets and apostles in terms of His outward work. First, He alone could reveal the gospel and the riches of God's grace. "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son,

who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18). Only Christ could tell us about the Father's compassion, affection, and gracious intention toward sinners. "No one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matt. 11:27). Second, He alone could apply the law in the gospel. "For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house" (Heb. 3:4-6). Moses was a mere servant who received the external law from Christ on Sinai, but it was Christ's voice that shook the mountain (Heb. 12:26).

Christ also needed to be greater than all the prophets and apostles in terms of His inward work. He is a fountain of wisdom to all the elect. "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God" (1 Cor. 1:30). People can teach the ear, but Christ alone can teach the heart. Blind men cannot see the sun even if it shines clearly upon them. Christ is the light which has come into the world, but darkness does not comprehend it. We must have eyes as well as light. Only divine power can open the eyes of our understanding and grant us spiritual illumination.

Kingly Office

Christ needed to break the power of enemies, raise the dead, give the Spirit, and bestow grace and glory. All these are Christ's gifts as King of the church. As King, He must be the original source of life for all the elect. "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me" (John 6:57). All these things are the glory of God, which He will not give to another, and they cannot be accomplished by anyone but God. Creatures are limited. They do not possess such vastness that we might receive grace upon grace from their fullness as we do from Christ (John 1:16).

Priestly Office

There are two acts to Christ's priestly office. The first is His oblation (or sacrifice). He must offer Himself once for all to expiate sin and secure God's favor. Who could do this but God? He must offer Himself, meaning He must be both priest and sacrifice. Therefore, He must have power over His own life, to lay it down and take it up. No creature has such power. Christ had an absolute power of life and death over the human nature He assumed. "Through the eternal Spirit," He "offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). Furthermore, one must be offered for all, as stated in 2 Corinthians 5:14, "If One died for all, then all died." Therefore, the person who suffered had to be virtually equal to all those

for whom He suffered, infinitely as good and better than all. Christ, who was given for all, had to be better than all. The worth of His person made Him equal in dignity to the worth of all those whom He sustained. His death is a standing remedy in all ages. The debt of sin was eternal death, and something had to compensate and counterbalance the duration of the punishment. Nothing could do this except the infiniteness and excellence of Christ's person. Therefore, we are said to be redeemed by the blood of God (Acts 20:28). This refers to the blood of that person who was God. It was necessary for Him to come out of His suffering because if He were always suffering, we could have no assurance that God was satisfied. If our surety were not taken from prison and judgment, how could we know that the debt was paid (Isa. 53:8)?

How can we reconcile the fact that Christ was to suffer only once for a short while yet accomplish something that would counterbalance eternity? It was because of the value of His person, which compensated for the vastness of eternity. His aim in all of this was to expiate sin, and nothing but an infinite good could remedy an infinite evil. The person wronged is infinite, and so is the person who suffers. He was not only a ransom to redeem us from hell but also a price given to God to purchase eternal glory for us. Christ was no ordinary surety. He brought God's grace and favor to us, and He merited heaven for us.

The second act to Christ's priestly office is His intercession. He who intercedes with God must be God in order to know our wants and necessities. Just as the high priest had the names of the twelve tribes on his breast and shoulders (Ex. 39:8–14), Christ has the names of all the elect. He knows our desires, wants, and conflicts. He is the one who negotiates with God on behalf of all believers so that He may send blessings suitable to our situation. Who can do this except God, who knows the heart and examines the mind? Who else could know our needs, wants, thoughts, sins, prayers, groans, desires, and purposes throughout the entire world? Who else could attend to our affairs day and night and continuously intervene so that wrath does not break out against us? Only an all-sufficient Savior!

CHAPTER 39

Great Love

Some people might think that a discourse on the deity of Christ is unnecessary, but the proofs are so clear that they do not need further explanation. He is referred to as “the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20), “Mighty God” (Isa. 9:6), and “eternally blessed God” (Rom. 9:5). Surely, Christ is not God by gift or grant; rather, He is so by nature, for the Lord will not give His glory to another. “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9), meaning that the entire essence of the Godhead resides in Him. This includes not only divine qualities but the entirety of the divine essence. Though He was “in the form of God, [He] did not consider it robbery to be equal with God” (Phil. 2:6). It was not a usurpation of another’s right. As you know, Christ preached this very doctrine. “Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He...also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18). Certainly, when Christ said that God was His Father, He did not mean it in the ordinary sense as

God is our God and Father but as He is God's eternal and everlasting Son. Thus, Christ is the great God.

This declares Christ's love in becoming man. What love did He show when He took on our nature! To see the great God in the form of a servant hanging upon the cross is a wonderful act of condescension. Christ's incarnation was a glorious plan. "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). If God had not revealed it, it would have been blasphemy for us to even think it. Angels stooped to see it, the prophets studied it, and how the saints should marvel at it! It is a great honor for humanity that the Son of God would take on human nature and die in our nature, and that the Word would not only be made flesh but be made sin and a curse for us.

Let us desire to partake in His nature just as He partakes in our nature (2 Peter 1:4). Christ's partaking in our nature was His humiliation, but our partaking in the divine nature is our glorification. Here is an invitation to compel us to come to God through Christ. He is worth more than a thousand of us. He is both God and man in one person. He is man so that we may not be afraid of Him. And He is God so that He may do good to us. He is the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, the heir of all things, the Savior of the world, a fitting object for our faith (1 Peter 1:21). He knows our needs and is able to meet them; indeed, "He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him" (Heb.

7:25). We can bring nothing to Him, but He has more than enough in Himself because He is the all-sufficient God. It is dangerous to ignore Him. "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven" (Heb. 12:25). It is God who is calling you. Bring Him nothing but your need and He will pay all your debts. In fact, nothing can harm you as long as He is on your side. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

CHAPTER 40

Our Savior

Christ is not only the great God but our Savior. How is Christ our Savior? We will consider this from both a positive and a negative perspective. He not only frees us from misery but grants us all spiritual blessings. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). He not only frees us from misery but grants us eternal life. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). He is a Savior not only by delivering us but by preventing us from falling. He not only heals our diseases but leads, guides, and protects us like as a Shepherd. We often overlook preventive mercy. How many times would we have fallen if we did not have a Savior? Prevention is better than escape. It is better to never encounter danger than to be delivered from it. There is an invisible guard protecting us, though we may not be aware of it.

Furthermore, Christ is a Savior both in terms of merit and power. He rescues not only from Satan but redeems us to God. If someone were to deliver a condemned person, it would not be enough to forcefully take them out of the executioner's hands. They must also satisfy the judge. This is what Christ has done. He not only delivered us from the power of darkness, but He has satisfied God's wrath whereby He is pleased with us in Christ. Before His exaltation, Christ redeemed us and earned our salvation. Now, He works out our salvation. When He was on earth, He was a Savior by merit, which is why it is said that we have salvation through His death (1 Thess. 5:9–10). After His exaltation, He continues to work out our salvation, and thus we are saved through His life (Rom. 5:10). He is ours both in life and death, so that in living and dying we may be His.

Furthermore, Christ saves us not only temporarily but eternally. That is why it is called "eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9). He saves us not only from temporal suffering but from hell and damnation. He saves not only our bodies but our souls. In fact, He saves us not only from hell but from the very fear of it. He not only delivers us from the harm of death but from the fear of it (Heb. 2:15). He not only gives us heaven but hope, freeing us from bondage and despair. He not only saves us from the consequences of sin but from the power of sin (Matt. 1:21). This is the most important aspect of His salvation. In short, He saves us not only partially but

completely (Heb. 7:25). He not only gives us grace at the beginning but provides us with everything necessary for life and godliness.

CHAPTER 41

Our Response

How should we respond to this Savior? For starters, we bless God for Christ. God has taken the care of our salvation into His own hands. "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him" (Isa. 59:16). It is as if Christ looked down from heaven and said, "Alas, poor creatures who are about to perish for lack of a savior! I will go down and help them." When Jonah saw the storm, he said, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you" (Jonah 1:12). Likewise, when Christ saw the storm, He said, "Cast me into the sea." "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God" (Heb. 10:9). Christ chose to be cast into the storm to calm it. Therefore, we should bless God for Christ.

Second, we reject all other saviors. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"

(Acts 4:12). When God threatened a flood to sweep away the old world, there was safety only in the ark. Even if the world had made other ships, they would not have held out against the flood. Similarly, unless you become implanted into Christ as members of His body (for He is the only Savior of His body), you are not safe. Avoid relying on the merit of your own works and the power of your own nature because this renounces Christ's humiliation and exaltation. Embrace Christ, for He came to seek and save that which was lost. We never seek Christ until we are about to perish. Why would we choose a Savior unless we perceive we are in danger? Faith necessarily entails renouncing ourselves, not just in words but in the disposition of our hearts. When you are utterly lost in yourself, you will turn to Christ.

Third, we make sure we have an interest in Christ. Do not be at peace until you can say, "Our Savior." You cannot find comfort in the great God until you can call Christ your Savior. "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46–47). We should be earnest with God for an interest in Christ and for the manifestation of it. You must choose Christ as your Savior. Faith is consenting to receive Christ as God offers Him. You must consent to the terms of the covenant of grace, declaring that you will have no other Savior but Christ. "'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I hope in Him!'" (Lam. 3:24). Ask God

to confirm your choice with His approval. Ask God to say, "Amen," so that Christ may be your Savior. The greatest part of salvation is being delivered from evil to come. Therefore, be earnest with God so that your interest in this salvation might be confirmed.

