# SERMON VI.[1]

**TRUE SAINTS, WHEN ABSENT FROM THE BODY, ARE PRESENT WITH THE LORD.**

2 CORINTHIANS v. 3. --We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

THE apostle in this place is giving a reason why he went on with so much boldness and immovable steadfastness, through such labors, sufferings, and dangers of his life, in the service of his Lord; for which his enemies, the false teachers among the Corinthians, sometimes reproached him as being beside himself, and driven on by a kind of madness. In the latter part of the preceding chapter, the apostle informs the Christian Corinthians, that the reason why he did thus, was, that he firmly believed the promises that Christ had made to his faithful servants of a glorious future eternal reward, and knew that these present afflictions were light, and but for a moment, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The same discourse is continued in this chapter; wherein the apostle further insists on the reason he had given of his constancy in suffering, and exposing himself to death in the work of the ministry, even the more happy state he expected after death. And this is the subject of the text; wherein may be observed,

1. The great future privilege, which the apostle hoped for; that of being present with Christ. The words, in the original, properly signify dwelling with Christ, as in the same country or city, or making a home with Christ.

2. When the apostle looked for this privilege, viz., when he should be absent from the body. Not to wait for it till the resurrection, when soul and body should be united again. He signifies the same thing in his epistle to the Philippians, chap. i. 22, 23: "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor. Yet what I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait between two; having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ."

3. The value the apostle set on this privilege. It was such, that for the sake of it, he chose to be absent from the body. He was willing rather, or (as the word properly signifies) it were more pleasing to him, to part with the present life, and all its enjoyments, and be possessed of this great benefit, than to continue here.

4. The present benefit, which the apostle had by his faith and hope of this future privilege, and of his great value for it, viz., that hence he received courage, assurance, and constancy of mind, agreeable to the proper import of the word that is rendered, we are confident. The apostle is now giving a reason of that fortitude and immovable stability of mind, with which he went through those extreme labors, hardships and dangers, which he mentions in this discourse; so that, in the midst of all, he did not faint, was not discouraged, but had constant light, and inward support, strength, and comfort in the midst of all: agreeable to the 10th verse of the foregoing chapter, "For which cause, we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." And the same is expressed more particularly in the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses, of that chapter: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." And in the next chapter, verses 4-10: "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-

suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Among the many useful observations there might be raised from the text, I shall at this time only insist on that which lies most plainly before us in the words, viz., this:

*The souls of true saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ.*

Departed souls of saints go to be with Christ, in the following respects:

I. They go to dwell in the same blessed abode with the glorified human nature of Christ.

The human nature of Christ is yet in being. He still continues, and will continue to all eternity, to be both God and man. His whole human nature remains: not only his human soul, but also his human body. His dead body rose from the dead; and the same that was raised from the dead, is exalted and glorified at God's right hand; that which was dead is now alive, and lives for evermore.

And therefore there is a certain place, a particular part of the external creation, to which Christ is gone, and where he remains. And this place is that which we call the highest heaven, or the heaven of heavens; a place beyond all the visible heavens. Eph. iv. 9, 10, "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens." This is the same which the apostle calls the third heaven, 2 Cor. xii. 2, reckoning the aerial heaven as the first, the starry heaven as the second, and the highest heaven as the third. This is the abode of the holy angels; they are called "the angels of heaven," Matt. xxiv. 36; "The angels which are in heaven," Mark xiii. 32; "The angels of God in heaven," Matt. xxii. 30, and Mark xii. 25. They are said "always to behold the face of the Father which is in heaven," Matt. xviii, 10. And they are elsewhere often represented as before the throne of God, or surrounding his throne in heaven, and sent from thence, and descending from thence on messages to this world. And thither it is that the souls of departed saints are conducted, when they die. They are not reserved in some abode distinct from the highest heaven; a place of rest, which they are kept in, till the day of judgment; such as some imagine, which they call the hades of the happy: but they go directly to heaven itself. This is the saints' home, being their Father's house: they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and this is the other and better country that they are travelling to, Heb. xi. 13—26. This is the city they belong to: Philip. iii. 20, "Our conversation or (as the word properly signifies) citizenship, is in heaven." Therefore this undoubtedly is the place the apostle has respect to in my text, when he says,"We are willing to forsake our former house, the body, and to dwell in the same house, city or country, wherein Christ dwells;" which is the proper import of the words of the original. What can this house, or city, or country be, but that house, which is elsewhere spoken of, as their proper home, and their Father's house, and the city and country to which they properly belong, and whither they are travelling all the while they continue in this world, and the house, city, and country where we know the human nature of Christ is? This is the saints' rest; here their hearts are while they live; and here their treasure is. "The inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, that is designed for them, is reserved in

heaven," 1 Pet. i. 4; and therefore they never can have their proper and full rest till they come here. So that undoubtedly their souls, when absent from their bodies (when the Scriptures represent them as in a state of perfect rest), arrive hither. Those two saints, that left this world, to go to their rest in another world, without dying, viz., Enoch and Elijah, went to heaven. Elijah was seen ascending up to heaven, as Christ was. And to the same resting place, is there all reason to think, that those saints go, that leave the world, to go to their rest, by death. Moses, when he died in the top of the mount, ascended to the same glorious abode with Elias, who ascended without dying. They are companions in another world; as they appeared together at Christ's transfiguration. They were together at that time with Christ in the mount, when there was a specimen or sample of his glorification in heaven. And doubtless they were also together afterwards, with him, when he was, actually, fully glorified in heaven. And thither undoubtedly it was, that the soul of Stephen ascended, when he expired. The circumstances of his death demonstrate it, as we have an account of it, Acts vii. 55, &c.: "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man (i.e. Jesus, in his human nature) standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Before his death he had an extraordinary view of the glory that his Saviour had received in heaven, not only for himself, but for him, and all his faithful followers; that he might be encouraged, by the hopes of this glory, cheerfully to lay down his life for his sake. Accordingly he dies in the hope of this, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." By which doubtless he meant, "receive my spirit to be with thee, in that glory, wherein I have now seen thee, in heaven, at the right hand of God." And thither it was that the soul of the penitent thief on the cross ascended. Christ said to him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paradise is the same with the third heaven; as appears by 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4. There that which is called the third heaven in the 2d verse, in the 4th verse is called paradise. The departed souls of the apostles and prophets are in heaven; as is manifest from Rev. xviii. 20: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets."

The church of God is distinguished in Scripture, from time to time, into these two parts; that part of it that is in heaven, and that which is in earth; Eph. iii. 14, 15, "Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Col. i. 20, "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Now what things in heaven are they for whom peace has been made by the blood of Christ's cross, and who have by him been reconciled to God, but the saints in heaven? In like manner we read, Eph. i. 10, of God's gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." The spirits of just men made perfect are in the same city of the living God, and heavenly Jerusalem, with the innumerable company of angels, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; as is manifest by Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. The church of God is often in Scripture called by the name Jerusalem; and the apostle speaks of the Jerusalem which is above, or which is in heaven, as the mother of us all; but if no part of the church be in heaven, or none but Enoch and Elias, it is not likely that the church would be called the Jerusalem which is in heaven.

II. The souls of true saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be

with Christ, as they go to dwell in the immediate, full and constant sight or view of him.

When we are absent from our dear friends, they are out of sight; but when we are with them, we have the opportunity and satisfaction of seeing them. So while the saints are in the body, and are absent from the Lord, HE is in several respects out of sight: 1 Pet. i. 8, "Whom having not seen, ye love: in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing," &c. They have indeed, in this world, a spiritual sight of Christ; but they see through a glass darkly, and with great interruption; but in heaven they see him face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12; "The pure in heart are blessed; for they shall see God," Matt. v. 8. Their beatifical vision of God is in Christ, who is that brightness or effulgence of God's glory, by which his glory shines forth in heaven, to the view of saints and angels there, as well as here on earth. This is the Sun of righteousness, that is not only the light of this world, but is also the sun that enlightens the heavenly Jerusalem; by whose bright beams it is that the glory of God shines forth there, to the enlightening and making happy all the glorious inhabitants. "The Lamb is the light thereof; and so the glory of God doth lighten it," Rev. xxi. 23. None sees God the Father immediately, who is the King eternal, immortal, invisible; Christ is the image of that invisible God, by which he is seen by all elect creatures. The only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him, and manifested him. None has ever immediately seen the Father, but the Son; and none else sees the Father any other way, than by the Son's revealing him. And in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect do see him as he is. They behold his glory. They see the glory of his divine nature, consisting in all the glory of the Godhead, the beauty of all his perfections; his great majesty, almighty power, his infinite wisdom, holiness, and grace, and they see the beauty of his glorified human nature, and the glory which the Father hath given him, as God-man and Mediator. For this end, Christ desired that his saints might "be with him, that they might behold his glory," John xvii. 24. And when the souls of the saints leave their bodies, to go to be with Christ, they behold the marvellous glory of that great work of his, the work of redemption, and of the glorious way of salvation by him; desire to look into. They have a most clear view of the unfathomable depths of the manifold wisdom and knowledge of God; and the most bright displays of the infinite purity and holiness of God, that do appear in that way and work; and see in a much clearer manner than the saints do here, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height of the grace and love of Christ, appearing in his redemption. And as they see the unspeakable riches and glory of the attribute of God's grace, so they most clearly behold and understand Christ's eternal and unmeasurable dying love to them in particular. And in short, they see every thing in Christ that tends to kindle and inflame love, and every thing that tends to gratify love, and every thing that tends to satisfy them: and that in the most clear and glorious manner, without any darkness or delusion, without any impediment or interruption. Now the saints, while in the body, see something of Christ's glory and love; as we, in the dawning of the morning, see something of the reflected light of the sun mingled with darkness; but when separated from the body, they see their glorious and loving Redeemer, as we see the sun when risen, and showing his whole disk above the horizon, by his direct beams, in a clear hemisphere, and with perfect day.

III. The souls of true saints, when absent from the body go to be with Jesus Christ, as they are brought into a most perfect conformity to and union with him. Their spiritual conformity is begun while they are in the hotly; here beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image; but when they come to see him as he is, in heaven, then they become like him in another

manner. That perfect sight will abolish all remains of deformity, disagreement, and sinful unlikeness; as all darkness is abolished before the full blaze of the sun's meridian light: it is impossible that the least degree of obscurity should remain before such light; so it is impossible the least degree of sin and spiritual deformity should remain, in such a view of the spiritual beauty and glory of Christ, as the saints enjoy in heaven; when they see that Sun of righteousness without a cloud, they themselves shine forth as the sun, and shall be as little suns, without a spot. For then is come the time when Christ presents his saints to himself, in glorious beauty; "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" and having holiness without a blemish. And then the saints' union with Christ is perfected. This also is begun in this world. The relative union is both begun and perfected at once, when the soul first closes with Christ by faith: the real union, consisting in the union of hearts and affections, and in the vital union, is begun in this world and perfected in the next. The union of the heart of a believer to Christ, is begun when his heart is drawn to Christ, by the first discovery of divine excellency, at conversion; and consequent on this drawing and closing of his heart with Christ, is established a vital union with Christ; whereby the believer becomes a living branch of the true vine, living by a communication of the sap and vital juice of the stock and root; and a member of Christ's mystical body, living by a communication of spiritual and vital influences from the head, and by a kind of participation of Christ's own life. But while the saints are in the body, there is much remaining distance between Christ and them: there are remainders of alienation, and the vital union is very imperfect; and so consequently is the communication of spiritual life and vital influences: there is much between Christ and believers to keep them asunder, much indwelling sin, much temptation, a world of carnal objects, to keep off the soul from Christ, and hinder a perfect coalescence.

But when the soul leaves the body, all these clogs and hinderances shall be removed, every separating wall shall be broken down, and every impediment taken out of the way, and all distance shall cease; the heart shall be wholly and forever attached and bound to him, by a perfect view of his glory. And the vital union shall then be brought to perfection; the soul shall live perfectly in and upon Christ, being perfectly filled with his spirit, and animated by his vital influences; living, as it were, only by Christ's life, without any remainder of spiritual death, or carnal life.

IV. Departed souls of saints are with Christ, as they enjoy a glorious and immediate intercourse and converse with him.

While we are present with our friends, we have opportunity for that free and immediate conversation with them, which we cannot have in absence from them. And therefore, by reason of the vastly more free, perfect, and immediate intercourse with Christ, which the saints enjoy when absent from the body, they are fitly represented as present with him.

The most intimate intercourse becomes that relation that the saints stand in to Jesus Christ; and especially becomes that most perfect and glorious union they shall be brought into with him in heaven. They are not merely Christ's servants, but his friends, John xv. 15. His brethren and companions, Psalm cxxii. 8; "yea, they are the spouse of Christ." They are espoused or betrothed to Christ while in the body; but when they go to heaven, they enter into the king's palace, their marriage with him is come, and the king brings them into his chambers indeed. They then go to dwell with Christ constantly, to enjoy the most perfect converse with him. Christ conversed in the most friendly manner with his disciples on earth; he admitted one of them to lean on his bosom: but they are

admitted much more fully and freely to converse with him in heaven. Though Christ be there in a state of glorious exaltation, reigning in the majesty and glory of the sovereign Lord and God of heaven and earth, angels and men; yet this will not hinder intimacy and freedom of intercourse, but rather promote it. For he is thus exalted, not only for himself, but for them; he is instated in this glory of head over all things for their sakes, that they might be exalted and glorified; and when they go to heaven where he is, they are exalted and glorified with him; and shall not be kept at a more awful distance from Christ, but shall be admitted nearer, and to a greater intimacy. For they shall be unspeakably more fit for it, and Christ in more fit circumstances to bestow on them this blessedness. Their seeing the great glory of their friend and Redeemer, will not awe them to a distance, and make them afraid of a near approach; but on the contrary, will most powerfully draw them near, and encourage and engage them to holy freedom. For they will know that it is he that is their own Redeemer, and beloved friend and bridegroom; the very same that loved them with a dying love, and redeemed them to God by his blood; Matt. xiv. 27, "It is I; be not afraid." Rev. i. 17, 18," Fear not:--I am he that liveth, and was dead." And the nature of this glory of Christ that they shall see, will be such as will draw and encourage them; for they will not only see infinite majesty and greatness, but infinite grace, condescension, and mildness, and gentleness and sweetness, equal to his majesty. For he appears in heaven, not only as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but as the Lamb, and the Lamb in the midst of the throne, "Rev. v. 5, 6; and this Lamb in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, to" feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water," Rev. vii. 17; so that the sight of Christ's great kingly majesty will be no terror to them; but will only serve the more to heighten their pleasure and surprise. When Mary was about to embrace Christ, being full of joy at the sight of him again alive after his crucifixion, Christ forbids her to do it for the ended: John xx. 16, 17, "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God." As if he had said, "This is not the time and place for that freedom your love to me desires: this is appointed in heaven after my ascension. I am going thither; and you that are my true disciples, shall, as my brethren and companions, soon be there with me in my glory. And then there shall be no restraint. That is the place appointed for the most perfect expressions of complacence and endearment, and full enjoyment of mutual love." And accordingly the souls of departed saints with Christ in heaven, shall have Christ as it were unbosomed unto them, manifesting those infinite riches of love towards them, that have been there from eternity; and they shall be enabled to express their love to him, in an infinitely better manner than ever they could while in the body. Thus they shall eat and drink abundantly, and swim in the ocean of love, and be eternally swallowed up in the infinitely bright, and infinitely mild and sweet beams of divine love; eternally receiving that light, eternally full of it, and eternally compassed round with it, and everlastingly reflecting it back again to the fountain of it.

V. The souls of the saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ, as they are received to a glorious fellowship with Christ in his blessedness.

As the wife is received to a joint possession of her husband's estate, and as the wife of a prince partakes with him in his princely possessions and honors; so the church, the spouse of Christ, when the marriage comes, and she is received to dwell with him in heaven, shall partake with him in his glory. When Christ rose

from the dead, and took possession of eternal life; this was not as a private person, but as the public head of all his redeemed people. He took possession of it for them, as well as for himself; and "they are quickened together with him, and raised up together." And so when he ascended into heaven, and was exalted to great glory there, this also was as a public person. He took possession of heaven, not only for himself, but his people, as their forerunner and head, that they might ascend also, "and sit together in heavenly places with him," Eph. ii. 5, 6. "Christ writes upon them his new name," Rev. iii. 12; i.e., he makes them partakers of his own glory and exaltation in heaven. His new name is that new honor and glory that the Father invested him with, when he set him on his own right hand. As a prince, when he advances any one to new dignity in his kingdom, gives him a new title. Christ and his saints shall be glorified together, Rom. viii. 17.

The saints in heaven have communion, or a joint participation with Christ in his glory and blessedness in heaven, in the following respects more especially.

1. They partake with him in the ineffable delights he has in heaven, in the enjoyment of his Father.

When Christ ascended into heaven, he was received to a glorious and peculiar joy and blessedness in the enjoyment of his Father, who, in his passion, hid his face from him; such an enjoyment as became the relation he stood in to the Father, and such as was a meet reward for the great and hard service he had performed on earth. Then "God showed him the path of life, and brought him into his presence, where is fulness of joy, and to sit on his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore," as is said of Christ, Psalm xvi. 11. Then the Father "made him most blessed forever. He made him exceeding glad with his countenance;" as in Psalm xxi. 6. The saints, by virtue of their union with Christ, and being his members, do, in some sort partake of his childlike relation to the Father; and so are heirs with him of his happiness in the enjoyment of his Father; as seems to be intimated by the apostle, in Gal. iv. 4--7. The spouse of Christ, by virtue of her espousals to that only begotten Son of God, is, as it were, a partaker of his filial relation to God, and becomes the king's daughter, Psalm xiv. 13, and so partakes with her divine husband in his enjoyment of his Father and her Father, his God and her God." A promise of this seems to be implied in those words of Christ to Mary, John xx. 17. Thus Christ's faithful servants "enter into the joy of their Lord," Matt. xxv. 21, 23, and "Christ's joy remains in them;" agreeably to those words of Christ, John xv. 11. Christ from eternity is, as it were, in the bosom of the Father, as the object of his infinite complacence. In him is the Father's eternal happiness. Before the world was, he was with the Father, in the enjoyment of his infinite love; and had infinite delight and blessedness in that enjoyment; as he declares of himself in Prov. viii. 30: "Then I was by him as one brought up with him. And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." And when Christ ascended to the Father after his passion, he went to him, to the enjoyment of the same glory and blessedness in the enjoyment of his love; agreeably to his prayer the evening before his crucifixion, John xvii. 5: "And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was." And in the same prayer, he manifests it to be his will, that his true disciples should be with him in the enjoyment of that joy and glory, which he then asked for himself, verse 13: "That my joy might be fulfilled in themselves:" verse 22, "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." This glory of Christ, which the saints are to enjoy with him, is that which he has in the enjoyment of the Father's infinite love to him; as appears by the last words of that prayer of our Lord, verse 26: "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." The love which the Father has to his Son is great indeed:

the Deity does, as it were, wholly and entirely flow out in a stream of love to Christ; and the joy and pleasure of Christ is proportionably great. This is the stream of Christ's delights, the river of his infinite pleasure; which he will make his saints to drink of with him, agreeably to Psal. xxxvi. 8, 9: "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house. Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life. In thy light shall we see light." The saints shall have pleasure in partaking with Christ in his pleasure, and shall see light in his light. They shall partake with Christ of the same river of pleasure, shall drink of the same water of life, and of the same new wine in Christ's Father's kingdom, Matt. xxvi. 29. That new wine is especially that joy and happiness that Christ and his true disciples shall partake of together in glory, which is the purchase of Christ's blood, or the reward of his obedience unto death. Christ, at his ascension into heaven, received everlasting pleasures at his Father's right hand, and in the enjoyment of his Father's love, as the reward of his own death, or obedience unto death. But the same righteousness is reckoned to both head and members; and both shall have fellowship in the same reward, each according to their distinct capacity.

That the saints in heaven have such a communion with Christ in his joy, and do so partake with him in his own enjoyment of the Father, does greatly manifest the transcendent excellency of their happiness, and their being admitted to a vastly higher privilege in glory than the angels.

2. The saints in heaven are received to a fellowship or participation with Christ in the glory of that dominion to which the Father hath exalted him.

The saints, when they ascend to heaven as Christ ascended, and are made to sit together with him in heavenly places, and are partakers of the glory of his exaltation, are exalted to reign with him. They are through him made kings and priests, and reign with him, and in him, over the same kingdom. As the Father hath appointed unto him a kingdom, so he has appointed to them. The Father has appointed the Son to reign over his own kingdom, and the Son appoints his saints to reign in his. The Father has given to Christ to sit with him on his throne, and Christ gives to the saints to sit with him on his throne, agreeably to Christ's promise, Rev. iii. 21. Christ, as God's Son, is the heir of his kingdom, and the saints are joint heirs with Christ: which implies, that they are heirs of the same inheritance, to possess the same kingdom, in and with him, according to their capacity. Christ, in his kingdom, reigns over heaven and earth; he is appointed the heir of all things; and so all things are the saints'; "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come," all are theirs; because they are Christ's, and united to him, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. The angels are given to Christ as a part of his dominion: they are all given to wait upon him as ministering spirits to him. So also they are all, even the highest and most dignified of them, ministering spirits, to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation. They are Christ's angels, and they are also their angels. Such is the saints' union with Christ, and their interest in him, that what he possesses, they possess, in a much more perfect and blessed manner than if all things were given to them separately, and by themselves, to be disposed of according to their discretion. They are now disposed of so as, in every respect, to be most for their blessedness, by an infinitely better discretion than their own; and in being disposed of by their head and husband, between whom and them there is the most perfect union of hearts, and so the most perfect union of wills, and who are most perfectly each other's.

As the glorified spouse of this great King reigns with and in him, in his dominion over the universe, so more especially does she partake with him in the

joy and glory of his reign in his kingdom of grace; which is more peculiarly the kingdom that he possesses as Head of the church, and is that kingdom wherein she is more especially interested. It was especially to reign in this kingdom, that God the Father exalted him to his throne in heaven: he set his King on his holy hill of Zion, especially that he might reign over Zion, or over his church, in his kingdom of grace; and that he might be under the best advantages to carry on the designs of his love in this lower world. And therefore undoubtedly the saints in heaven are partakers with Christ in the joy and glory of the advancement and prosperity of his kingdom of grace on earth, and success of his gospel here, which he looks on as the peculiar glory of his reign.

The good shepherd rejoices when he finds but one sheep that was lost; and his friends and neighbors in heaven rejoice with him on that occasion. That part of the family that is in heaven is surely not unacquainted with the affairs of that part of the same family that is on earth. They that are with the King and are next to him, the royal family, that dwell in his palace, are not kept in ignorance of the affairs of his kingdom. The saints in heaven are with the angels, the King's ministers, by which he manages the affairs of his kingdom, and who are continually ascending and descending from heaven to the earth, and one or other of them daily employed as ministering spirits to each individual member of the church below: besides the continual ascending of the souls of departed saints from all parts of the militant church. On these accounts the saints in heaven must needs be under a thousand times greater advantage than we here for a full view of the state of the church on earth, and a speedy, direct, and certain acquaintance with all its affairs in every part. And that which gives them much greater advantage for such an acquaintance than the things already mentioned, is their being constantly in the immediate presence of Christ, and in the enjoyment of the most perfect intercourse with him, who is the King who manages all these affairs, and has an absolutely perfect knowledge of them. Christ is the head of the whole glorified assembly; they are mystically his glorified body: and what the head sees, it sees for the information of the whole body, according to its capacity: and what the head enjoys, is for the joy of the whole body.

The saints, in leaving this world, and ascending to heaven, do not go out of sight of things appertaining to Christ's kingdom on earth; but, on the contrary, they go out of a state of obscurity, and ascend above the mists and clouds into the clearest light: to a pinnacle in the very centre of light, where every thing appears in clear view. They have as much greater advantage to view the state of Christ's kingdom, and the works of the new creation here, than while they were in this world, as a man that ascends to the top of a high mountain has a greater advantage to view the face of the earth, than he had while he was in a deep valley, or thick forest below, surrounded on every side with those things that impeded and limited his sight. Nor do they view as indifferent or unconcerned spectators, any more than Christ himself is an unconcerned spectator.

The happiness of the saints in heaven consists very much in beholding the glory of God appearing in the work of redemption: for it is by this chiefly that God manifests his glory, the glory of his wisdom, holiness, grace, and other perfections, to both saints and angels; as is apparent by many Scriptures. And therefore undoubtedly their happiness consists very much in beholding the progress of this work in its application and success, and the steps by which infinite power and wisdom bring it to its consummation. And the saints in heaven are under unspeakably greater advantage to take the pleasure of beholding the progress of this work on earth than we are that are here; as they are under greater advantages to see and understand the marvellous steps that Divine

Wisdom takes in all that is done, and the glorious ends he obtains, the opposition Satan makes, and how he is baffled and overthrown. They can better see the connection of one event with another, and the beautiful order of all things that come to pass in the church in different ages that to us appear like confusion. Nor do they only view these things, and rejoice in them, as a glorious and beautiful sight, but as persons interested, as Christ is interested; as possessing these things in Christ, and reigning with him, in this kingdom. Christ's success in his work of redemption, in bringing home souls to himself, applying his saving benefits by his Spirit, and the advancement of the kingdom of grace in the world, is the reward especially promised to him by his Father in the covenant of redemption, for the hard and difficult service he performed while in the form of a servant; as is manifest by Isai. liii. 10, 11, 12. But the saints shall be rewarded with him: they shall partake with him in the joy of this reward; for this obedience that is thus rewarded is reckoned to them as they are his members, as was before observed. This was especially the joy that was set before Christ, for the sake of which he endured the cross and despised the shame. And his joy is the joy of all heaven. They that are with him in heaven are under much the greatest advantages to partake with him in this joy; for they have a perfect communion with him through whom, and in fellowship with whom, they enjoy and possess their whole inheritance, all their heavenly happiness; as much as the whole body has all its pleasure of music by the ear, and all the pleasure of its food by the mouth and stomach; and all the benefit and refreshment of the air by the lungs. The saints while on earth pray and labor for the same thing that Christ labored for, viz., the advancement of the kingdom of God among men, the promoting of the prosperity of Zion, and flourishing of religion in this world; and most of them have suffered for that end as Christ did, have been made partakers with their head in his sufferings, and "filled up (as the apostle expresses it) that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ:" and therefore they shall partake with him of the glory and joy of the end obtained. Rom. viii. 17, "We are joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." 2 Tim. ii. 12, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Christ, when his sufferings were past, and he left the earth and ascended into heaven, was so far from having done with kingdom in this world, that it was as it were but then begun: and he ascended for that very end, that he might more fully possess and enjoy this kingdom, that he might reign in it, and be under the best advantages for it; as much as a king ascends a throne in order to reign over his people, and receive the honor and glory of his dominion. No more have the saints done with Christ's kingdom on earth, when they leave the earth and ascend into heaven. "Christ came (i.e., ascended) with clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and was brought near before him, to the very end, that he might receive dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve him," Dan. vii. 13, 14. Which shall be eminently fulfilled after the ruin of Antichrist, which is especially the time of Christ's kingdom. And the same is the time when "the kingdom and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High God;" as verse 27, in the same chapter. It is because they shall reign in and with Christ, the Most High, as seems intimated in the words that follow; "whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." This verse is true, not only of the saints on earth, but also the saints in heaven. Hence the saints in heaven, having respect to this time, do sing, in Rev. v. 10, "We shall reign on the earth." And agreeably hereto, it is afterwards represented, that when the forementioned time comes, the souls of them that in

former ages had suffered with Christ do reign with Christ; having as it were given to them new life and joy, in that spiritual blessed resurrection, which shall then be of the church of God on earth; and thus it is that it is said, Matt. v. 5, "The meek (those that meekly and patiently suffer with Christ, and for his sake) shall inherit the earth:" they shall inherit it, and reign on earth with Christ. Christ is the heir of the world; and when the appointed time of his kingdom comes, his inheritance shall be given him, and then the meek, who are joint heirs, shall inherit the earth. The place in the Old Testament whence the words are taken, leads to a true interpretation of them. Psal. xxxvii. 11, "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." That there is reference in these latter words, "the abundance of peace," to the peace and blessedness of the latter days, we may be satisfied by comparing these words with Psal. lxxii. 7," In his days shall be abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth:" and Jer. xxxiii. 6, "I will reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth:" also Isai. ii. 4, Micah iv. 3, Isai. xi. 6--9, and many other parallel places. The saints in heaven will be as much with Christ in reigning over the nations, and in the glory of his dominion at that time, as they will he with him in the honor of judging the world at the last day. That promise of Christ to his disciples, Matt. xix. 28, 29, seems to have a special respect to the former of these. In verse 28, Christ promises to the disciples, that hereafter, "when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The saints in heaven reigning on earth in the glorious latter day, is described in language accommodated to this promise of Christ, Rev. xx. 4: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them; and judgment was given them. And they reigned with Christ." And the promise in the next verse, in that xixth of Matthew, seems to have its fulfillment at the same time: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or fathers, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life;" i.e., in the time when the saints shall inherit the earth and reign on earth, the earth, with all its blessings and good things, shall be given in great abundance to the church, to be possessed by the saints. This shall they receive in this present world, and in the time to come everlasting life. The saints in heaven shall partake with Christ in the triumph and glory of those victories that he shall obtain in that future glorious time, over the kings and nations of the world, that are sometimes represented by his ruling them with a rod of iron, and dashing them in pieces as a potter's vessel. Which doubtless there is respect to in Rev. ii. 26, 27: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: (and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessel of a potter shall they be broken to shivers:) even as I received of my Father." And Psal. cxlix. 5, to the end: "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds;" i.e., in their separate state after death; compare Isai. lvii. 1, 2. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand: to execute vengeance upon the Heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all the saints." Accordingly when Christ appears riding forth to his victory over Antichrist, Rev. xix., the hosts of heaven appear going forth with him in robes of triumph, verse 14. And when Antichrist is destroyed, the inhabitants of heaven, and the holy apostles and prophets, are called upon to rejoice, chap. xviii. 20. And accordingly the whole multitude of the inhabitants of heaven, on that occasion, do appear to exult and praise God with exceeding joy, chap. xix. 1—8, and chap. xi. 15; and are also represented as greatly rejoicing on occasion of the ruin of the heathen empire, in

the days of Constantine, chap xii. 10.

And it is observable all along in the visions of that book, the hosts of heaven appear as much concerned and interested in the events appertaining to the kingdom of Christ here below, as the saints on earth. The day of the commencement of the church's latter day glory is eminently "the day of Christ's espousals; the day of the gladness of his heart, when as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so he will rejoice over his church." And then will all heaven exceedingly rejoice with him. And therefore they say at that time, Rev. xix. 7, "Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give glory to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come."

Thus Abraham enjoys these things when they come to pass, that were of old promised to him, and that he saw beforehand, and rejoiced in. He will enjoy the fulfilment of the promise of all the families of the earth being blessed in his seed, when it shall be accomplished. And all the ancient patriarchs, who died in faith of promises of glorious things that should be accomplished in this world, "who had not received the promises, but saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them," do actually enjoy them when fulfilled. David actually saw and enjoyed the fulfilment of that promise, in its due time, which was made to him many hundred years before, and was all his salvation and all his desire. Thus Daniel shall stand in his lot at the end of the days pointed out by his own prophecy. Thus the saints of old that died in faith, not having received the promises, are made perfect, and have their faith crowned by the better things accomplished in these latter days of the gospel, Heb. xi. 39, 40, which they see and enjoy in their time.

3. The departed souls of saints have fellowship with Christ, in his blessed and eternal employment of glorifying the Father.

The happiness of heaven consists not only in contemplation, and a mere passive enjoyment, but consists very much in action. And particularly in actively serving and glorifying God. This is expressly mentioned as a great part of the blessedness of the saints in their most perfect state, Rev. xxii. 3: "And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." The angels are as a flame of fire in their ardor and activity in God's service: the four animals, Rev. iv. (which are generally supposed to signify the angels), are represented as continually giving praise and glory to God, and are said not to rest day nor night, verse 8. The souls of departed saints are, doubtless, become as the angels of God in heaven in this respect. And Jesus Christ is the head of the whole glorious assembly; as in other things appertaining to their blessed state, so in this of their praising and glorifying the Father. When Christ, the night before he was crucified, prayed for his exaltation to glory, it was that he might glorify the Father: John xvii. 1, "These words spake Jesus, and lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." And this he doubtless does, now he is in heaven; not only in fulfilling the Father's will, in what he does as head of the church and ruler of the universe, but also in leading the heavenly assembly in their praises. When Christ instituted the Supper, and ate and drank with his disciples at his table (giving them therein a representation and pledge of their future feasting with him, and drinking new wine in his heavenly Father's kingdom), he at that time led them in their praises to God, in that hymn that they sang. And so doubtless he leads his glorified disciples in heaven. David was the sweet psalmist of Israel, and he led the great congregation of God's people in their songs of praise. Herein, as well as in innumerable other things, he was a type of Christ, who is often spoken of in Scripture by the name of David. And many of the psalms

that David penned, were songs of praise, that he, by the spirit of prophecy, uttered in the name of Christ, as Head of the church, and leading the saints in their praises. Christ in heaven leads the glorious assembly in their praises to God, as Moses did the congregation of Israel at the Red Sea; which is implied in its being said, that "they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb," Rev. xv. 2, 3. In Rev. xix. 5, John tells us, that "he heard a voice come out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." Who can it be that utters this voice out of the throne, but the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, calling on the glorious assembly of saints to praise his Father and their Father, his God and their God? And what the consequence of this voice is, we have an account in the next words: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

## APPLICATION.

The use that I would make of what has been said on this subject is of EXHORTATION. Let us all be exhorted hence earnestly to seek after that great privilege that has been spoken of, that when "we are absent from the body, we may be present with the Lord." We cannot continue always in these earthly tabernacles: they are very frail, and will soon decay and fall; and are continually liable to be overthrown by innumerable means: our souls must soon leave them, and go into the eternal world. O, how infinitely great will the privilege and happiness of such be, who at that time shall go to be with Christ in his glory, in the manner that has been represented! The privilege of the twelve disciples was great, in being so constantly with Christ as his family, in his state of humiliation. The privilege of those three disciples was great, who were with him in the mount of his transfiguration; where was exhibited to them some little semblance of his future glory in heaven, such as they might behold in the present frail, feeble, and sinful state: they were greatly entertained and delighted with what they saw; and were for making tabernacles to dwell there, and return no more down the mount. And great was the privilege of Moses when he was with Christ in Mount Sinai, and besought him to show him his glory, and he saw his back parts as he passed by, and proclaimed his name. But is not that privilege infinitely greater, that has now been spoken of, the privilege of being with Christ in heaven, where he sits on the right hand of God, in the glory of the King and God of angels, and of the whole universe, shining forth as the great light, the bright sun of that world of glory; there to dwell in the full, constant and everlasting view of his beauty and brightness; there most freely and intimately to converse with him, and fully to enjoy his love, as his friends and spouse; there to have fellowship with him in the infinite pleasure and joy he has in the enjoyment of his Father; there to sit with him on his throne, and reign with him in the possession of all things, and partake with him in the joy and glory of his victory over his enemies, and the advancement of his kingdom in the world, and to join with him in joyful songs of praise to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God, forever and ever? Is not such a privilege worth the seeking after?

But here, as a special enforcement of this exhortation, I would improve that dispensation of God's holy providence, that is the sorrowful occasion of our coming together at this time, viz., the death of that eminent servant of Jesus Christ, in the work of the gospel ministry, whose funeral is this day to be attended; together with what was observable in him, living and dying.

In this dispensation of Providence, God puts us in mind of our mortality,

and forewarns us that the time is approaching when we must be absent from the body, and "must all appear (as the apostle observes in the next verse but one to my text) before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one of us may receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad."

And in him, whose death we are now called to consider and improve, we have not only an instance of mortality, but an instance of one that, being absent from the body, is present with the Lord; as we have all imaginable reason to conclude. And that, whether we consider the nature of the operations he was under, about the time whence he dates his conversion, or the nature and course of his inward exercises from that time forward, or his outward conversation and long space wherein he looked death in the face.

His convictions of sin, preceding his first consolations in Christ (as appears by a written account he has left of his inward exercises and experiences), were exceeding deep and thorough: his trouble and exercise of mind, through a sense of guilt and misery, very great and long continued, but yet sound and solid; consisting in no unsteady, violent and unaccountable hurries and frights, and strange perturbations of mind; but arising from the most serious consideration, and proper illumination of the conscience to discern and consider the true state of things. And the light let into his mind at conversion, and the influences and exercises that his mind was subject to at that time, appear very agreeable to reason and the gospel of Jesus Christ; the change very great and remarkable, without any appearance of strong impressions on the imagination, sudden flights and pangs of the affections, and vehement emotions in animal nature; but attended with proper intellectual views of the supreme glory of the divine Being, consisting in the infinite dignity and beauty of the perfections of his nature, and of the transcendent excellency of the way of salvation by Christ. This was about eight years ago, when he was about twenty-one years of age.

Thus God sanctified and made meet for his use, that vessel that he intended to make eminently a vessel of honor in his house, and which he had made of large capacity, having endowed him with very uncommon abilities and gifts of nature. He was a singular instance of a ready invention, natural eloquence, easy flowing expression, sprightly apprehension, quick discerning, and a very strong memory; and yet of a very penetrating genius, close and clear thought, and piercing judgment. He had an exact taste: his understanding was (if I may so express it) of a quick, strong and distinguishing scent.

His learning was very considerable: he had a great taste for learning; and applied himself to his studies in so close a manner when he was at college, that he much injured his health; and was obliged on that account for a while to leave the college, throw by his studies and return home. He was esteemed one that excelled in learning in that society.

He had an extraordinary knowledge of men, as well as things. Had a great insight into human nature, and excelled most that ever I knew in a communicative faculty: he had a peculiar talent at accommodating himself to the capacities, tempers and circumstances, of those that he would instruct or counsel.

He had extraordinary gifts for the pulpit: I never had opportunity to hear him preach, but have often heard him pray: and I think his manner of addressing himself to God, and expressing himself before him, in that duty, almost inimitable; such (so far as I may judge) as I have very rarely known equalled. He expressed himself with that exact propriety and pertinency, in such significant, weighty, pungent expressions; with that decent appearance of

sincerity, reverence, and solemnity, and great distance from all affectation, as forgetting the presence of men, and as being in the immediate presence of a great and holy God, that I have scarcely ever known paralleled. And his manner of preaching, by what I have often heard of it from good judges, was no less excellent; being clear and instructive, natural, nervous, forcible, and moving, and very searching and convincing. He nauseated an affected noisiness, and violent boisterousness in the pulpit; and yet much disrelished a flat, cold delivery, when the subject of discourse, and matter delivered, required affection and earnestness.

Not only had he excellent talents for the study and the pulpit, but also for conversation. He was of a sociable disposition; and was remarkably free, entertaining, and profitable in ordinary discourse; and had much of a faculty of disputing, defending truth and confuting error.

As he excelled in his judgment and knowledge of things in general, so especially in divinity. He was truly, for one of his standing, an extraordinary divine. But above all, in matters relating to experimental religion. In this, I know I have the concurring opinion of some that have had a name for persons of the best judgment. And according to what ability I have to judge things of this nature, and according to my opportunities, which of late have been very great, I never knew his equal, of his age and standing, for clear, accurate notions of the nature and essence of true religion, and its distinctions from its various false appearances; which I suppose to be owing to these three things meeting together in him;--the strength of his natural genius, and the great opportunities he had of observation of others, in various parts, both white people and Indians, and his own great experience.

His experiences of the holy influences of God's Spirit were not only great at his first conversion, but they were so, in a continued course, from that time forward; as appears by a record, or private journal, he kept of his daily inward exercises, from the time of his conversion, until he was disabled by the failing of his strength, a few days before his death. The change which he looked upon as his conversion, was not only a great change of the present views, affections, and frame of his mind; but was evidently the beginning of that work of God on his heart, which God carried on, in a very wonderful manner, from that time to his dying day. He greatly abhorred the way of such, as live on their first work, as though they had now got through their work, and are thence forward, by degrees, settled in a cold, lifeless, negligent, worldly frame; he had an ill opinion of such persons' religion.[2]

Oh that the things that were seen and heard in this extraordinary person, his holiness, heavenliness, labor and self-denial in life, his so remarkably devoting himself and his all, in heart and practice, to the glory of God, and the wonderful frame of mind manifested, in so steadfast a manner, under the expectation of death, and the pains and agonies that brought it on, may excite in us all, both ministers and people, a due sense of the greatness of the work we have to do in the world, the excellency and amiableness of thorough religion in experience and practice, and the blessedness of the end of such, whose death finishes such a life, and the infinite value of their eternal reward, when absent from the body and present with the Lord; and effectually stir us up to endeavors, that in the way of such a holy life we may at least come to so blessed an end. AMEN.

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[1]Preached on the day of the funeral of the Rev. Mr. David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians, from the Honorable Society in Scotland for the propagation of Christian Knowledge, and Pastor of a Church of Christian Indians in New Jersey; who died at Northampton, in New England, October

9, 1747, in the 30th year of his age, and was interred on the l2th following.

[2]We have ormtted a few pages which follow here of this discourse, because what the author communicates, respecting Mr. Brainerd, is to be found almost in the same words in the Memoirs of his life, and in his Reflections upon it, which he afterwards published, and which the reader will find in the first volume of this work.