

Christian Retirement

Part 70

By [Thomas Reade](#)

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ON THE BELIEVER'S AIM AND HOPE

How beautiful and glorious is the plan of human redemption! Angels may well desire to look into it. At the birth of our Emanuel, they declared its gracious design; even that of bringing "glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, and good-will towards men." The apostle felt the happy effect of this salvation in his own soul, when he could say, "To me, to live is Christ; and to die, is gain."

Jesus is the eternal spring of light, life, and glory. He made all things, and by him all things are held together. Dead souls are quickened to a life of faith and holiness by his almighty power; and through him they are preserved, in the midst of a wicked world, unto his everlasting kingdom. Oh my soul, is Jesus the source of your spiritual life? Am I looking to him, and living upon him daily by faith? Have I learned that by nature I am dead in trespasses and sins; that of myself I am unable to do anything that is pleasing unto God; that I may have a form of godliness, and a name to live, while destitute of saving grace? This religious complexion of my character may arise from education—the force of example—or a self-righteous principle. But this is not spiritual life. With every exterior of devotion, I may be spiritually dead. Can I in such a state say with the apostle, "To me, to live is Christ?" Surely not. If I am truly quickened by the Spirit of Christ, Christ will be the acknowledged source of my life. As I derive all my powers from him, so will those powers be devoted to his glory. I shall love him with a supreme affection.

Blessed Jesus! graciously communicate your saving strength to my soul. Raise me from a death in sin to a life of righteousness. Enlighten my dark mind. Warm my cold affections. Melt my hard heart. Subdue my stubborn will; and make me a new creature, that I may walk before you in newness of life.

Jesus is the great example to his people. "He that says he abides in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he walked." "He left us an example, that we should follow his steps." "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him." "Let that mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "If you love me, keep my commandments." "Follow me."

Oh that I may have grace to set the Lord always before me, and to contemplate the meek and lowly Savior with increasing admiration, until my soul is transformed into his likeness. While treading in his steps, and copying his example, I shall enjoy the light of his countenance, and the consolation of his Spirit; for the precious promise is, "if any man loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

The great end and aim of the believer's life, is to promote the glory of Jesus. Paul declared to the Philippians, that the one object of all his labors and sufferings was, that Christ might be magnified in his body, whether it be by life or death. And then he adds, "for to me, to live is Christ, to die is gain." Those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, will be anxious to glorify him with their bodies and their spirits, which are his. All their desire will be to him, and the glory of his name. Is this my happy experience? Am I seeking to promote the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom? Do I esteem every enjoyment joyless, which is not sweetened by his love; and every effort useless, which is not connected with his glory? If Jesus is the author of my spiritual life, light, and fruitfulness; if he is the great example, ever present to my mind; if the promotion of his glory is the one aim of my united powers; then may I say with the apostle, "To me, to live is Christ." What object so noble—what end so glorious, as thus to live simply and entirely to him who is Lord of lords, and King of kings! While thus living, I may join with Paul in his happy experience, and say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

While thus living, I may scripturally take the full comfort of his joyful expectation, and exclaim, "To me, to die is gain." "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory;" for he has said, "Because I live, you shall live also," "Where I am, there you shall be also," "Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." Glorious hope! blessed expectation!

To every humble believer death will be everlasting gain. It is only a quick transition from earth to heaven. To be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord. No wonder, then, that the apostle longed to be dissolved, that he might be with Christ. How happy is the death of every true believer in Jesus! That dreadful sting, which gives death all its terror, was extracted by the Savior, when, expiring on the cross, he exclaimed, "It is finished." "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." "Through death, he destroyed him that has the power of death, that is, the devil."

No dire foreboding no agonizing fears of approaching dissolution, rend the heart of the humble believer; or accelerate the wasting disease. Hope bears up the heir

of glory amid all his sufferings. Faith pierces the veil; which hides the heavenly world from mortal eyes; while love burns brighter, as it reaches the source from where it came.

Oh my soul, are you prepared to die? Have you fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the Gospel? Are you washed from your sins through the blood of the Lamb? Have you experienced a new and divine change? Have you passed from darkness unto light, and from Satan unto God? Oh blessed Savior, perform in me all the good pleasure of your goodness, and the work of faith with power.

Death is gain to the believer, because it will increase his knowledge beyond all that he can now conceive. Here we see as through a glass, darkly. We behold spiritual objects as in a mirror, through the medium of natural things; but in heaven, we shall behold the adorable Savior, not as now veiled under figures and emblems, but face to face. We shall see him as he is, and be made like him in the beauty of holiness. Oh what a vision will that be! Who can describe the glorified person of our Emanuel? Who can paint the resplendent Sun of righteousness, whose beams gladden and illuminate all the realms above?

The apostles were favored with a glimpse of his glory on Mount Tabor, when the Savior shone as the sun, and when his clothing was white as the light. John was permitted to enjoy a rich display of the Redeemer's glory, when an exile in the isle of Patmos. But how faintly does human language set forth the glories of that Being, from whose presence the heaven and earth shall flee away; who inhabits eternity! If all created glories are thrown into the shade, when Jesus is revealed to the soul, while dwelling in a house of clay; how will they be lost amid those radiant perfections which shall hereafter be revealed, when the believer, admitted into the Savior's presence, shall behold all heaven unveiled to his sight! Well might the apostle count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

Oh blessed Spirit of wisdom and truth, give me an increasing knowledge of Jesus and the glories of his kingdom. Impart unto me a spiritual, experimental knowledge of that love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that I may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Death will be gain to the believer, because it will increase his holiness. Here on earth, we have to contend with an evil nature, although subdued by almighty grace, and changed in a considerable degree through the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet the Canaanites are still in the land. The remainders of corruption require continual watchfulness and circumspection, lest they increase and regain their former possession of the heart. Sin still dwelling in the believer, causes that warfare, which must never cease until this body of death is laid in the grave, never more to harass the disembodied spirit encircled with heavenly glory.

Oh that I may daily hunger and thirst after righteousness! I want to be holy, as God is holy; to have my will swallowed up in his. I feel sin daily working within me, but Oh, may I hate and abhor it! May I ever feel it to be my grief my burden, and my cross; and rejoice at every victory obtained over it through the blood of the Lamb.

How unspeakably blessed must heaven be, where sin can gain no admittance; where every object shall administer the purest felicity; and where Jesus himself will be the eternal source of joy!

Death must, then, indeed be gain to the believe; for it shall put him in complete possession of everlasting happiness.

Here on earth we groan, being burdened. Here we live in an enemy's country, through which we must pass, contending every inch of our way to Zion. Here we live as in a great hospital, between the dying and the dead. Here we are surrounded with all kinds of natural and moral evils flowing from that poisoned source—the fall of man. Here we must drink the bitter waters of Marah—made still more bitter by our love of ease; our lack of resignation to the will of God; our selfishness of spirit; our rebelliousness of heart to his disposals.

The believer, it is true, experiences daily mercies which compass him about; for the Lord will not forsake his inheritance in the waste howling wilderness. His supplies, like the ancient manna, are continually falling around his tent. He has light in his dwelling, and can, therefore, rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation. He glories in tribulation for Christ's sake; and, like the martyr of old, can kiss the fagot, which, as another chariot of fire, is appointed to convey his soul to heaven. But still his happiness is greatly interrupted through the vestiges of indwelling sin, the wickedness of mankind, and the malice of Satan. He, therefore, looks forward with joyful expectation to that glorious period, when his happy spirit will take its station near the throne of his beloved Savior; and rejoices in hope of the glory of God.

How passing strange, that dying, sinful worms of the earth, should ridicule and despise such a hope and end as this! Oh almighty Spirit! descend into my soul. Banish every thing which is contrary to your holy nature, and obstructive to my spiritual progress towards the realms of bliss. Fill me with light and love—with joy and peace. Take me under your guardian care. Guide me by your unerring hand through all the dangerous mazes of this mortal state, until brought to the full fruition of your glorious Godhead, through the all-sufficient merits of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How happy is the dying saint,
Whose sins are all forgiven;
With joy he passes Jordan's flood,
Upheld by hopes of heaven.

The Savior, whom he truly loved,
Now cheers him by his grace;
A glory gilds his dying bed,
And beams upon his face.

Ecstatic joy and heavenly bliss
Swell his enraptured heart;
He views the promised land of rest,
And pants for his depart.

Terror and dread are both unknown;
Sweet peace and hope appear,
To guide the blessed traveler home,
And all his footsteps cheer.

Angels of light attendant wait
His spirit to convey
Beyond this drear abode of night,
To realms of endless day.

Oh! may I live the life of faith,
Abound in holy love,
Until death shall bear my joyful soul
To Zion's courts above.

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