

Christian Retirement

Part 75

By [Thomas Reade](#)

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ON HEAVEN

Come, Oh my soul, and meditate on the joys and glories of the heavenly world! Lift up your eyes unto the hills from where comes your help; those everlasting hills, where all the precious flock of Christ will eternally feed, and where the great Shepherd of the sheep immediately dwells. Nothing tends more to ennoble the mind, and refine the faculties of the soul, than frequent and pious contemplations on the grace of Jesus, on the love of the Father, on the communion of the Holy Spirit, on the felicities reserved in heaven for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. When the mind is once filled with these stupendous, yet endearing subjects, how contemptible and trifling do all earthly things appear!

The word of God reveals much that is captivating to the soul, respecting the abodes of glory; yet language cannot describe, nor the mind conceive, the blessed reality. What heaven really is, we must die to know. All the glories of kingdoms, all the beauties of gardens, all the splendors of palaces, yes, all the riches of creation, form but a faint sketch of the sublime original.

Earth can only afford a shadowy representation of heavenly glory. The Holy Spirit reveals far sweeter views to our minds, than those which are drawn from sublunary scenes.

HEAVEN IS A STATE OF REST. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest." How delightful is rest to the weary traveler, to the sons and daughters of affliction; to those whose bodies are "chastened with pain;" or whose souls are "filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud."

How cheering is the prospect of rest to the persecuted followers of Jesus, who find no abiding city here, being driven from place to place by the rude hand of arbitrary power. How happy was the exchange for Lazarus, when carried by angels from a leprous body, wasted with hunger, to Abraham's bosom, to the mansion of the blessed, the paradise of God.

HEAVEN IS THE ABODE OF PEACE. Pleasing thought indeed, to those who are constrained to dwell with Mesech, and have their habitation among the tents of Kedar; who are compelled to say with David, "my soul has long dwelt with those who are enemies to peace, whose tongues are sharp swords," wounding the feelings, and destroying the happiness of all around them. But in heaven all is harmony and love. There, every heart vibrates in unison, and swells with pure affection.

The sons of peace shall dwell with their heavenly Father, who is the God of peace; with Jesus their Redeemer, who is the Prince of Peace; with the Holy Spirit, whose fruit is peace. The Triune God will cause their peace to flow like a river fed by a perennial spring, whose waters fail not; ever issuing, clear as crystal, from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

HEAVEN IS A STATE OF PERFECT HOLINESS. How ardently does the true believer in Jesus pant after perfect holiness. Here, indeed, he cannot attain unto it. Every moment bespeaks his infirmity. Too often, alas! his deep corruption, inwardly felt and deplored, makes him cry out in bitter anguish of spirit, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" In heaven, he shall be forever delivered from the workings of inbred sin. In heaven, he shall be perfected in holiness. He loves, therefore, to anticipate the bliss of heaven, which consists in seeing God in all his unutterable glories; in being made like him in the perfection of beauty; in being forever with him in the enjoyment of his love.

In heaven, he will be pure as God is pure, holy as God is holy; not, indeed, in degree, but in nature. All the loveliness of the Savior will be reflected from the heavenly bride, when, adorned with every grace and clothed in the righteousness of her beloved Lord, she shall shake herself from the dust at the morning of the resurrection, and arise and shine in the full splendor of eternal glory.

Oh! how glorious will that period be, when all the elect of God shall be gathered in; when not a grain of the precious seed shall be lost; when every, even the feeblest lamb shall be housed from the storm.

HEAVEN IS A STATE OF UNMIXED HAPPINESS. No tears bedew the cheeks, no sorrow rends the hearts of its blissful inhabitants. In those celestial regions there is no pain, neither painful separation of kindred souls. All is blooming health and immortal vigor. There, death shall strike its dart no more; for death is swallowed up in victory.

Sin, which now embitters every blessing, cannot shed its baneful influence over the glorified spirits surrounding the throne of God. Satan can find no admittance into those realms of bliss. The world, and all which it contains, shall have passed away. Every enemy shall be destroyed; and Christ shall reign forever and ever.

HEAVEN IS A STATE OF NEVER-ENDING BLISS. This stamps a value, which all the gilded happiness of this world cannot boast. "The perpetuity of bliss, is bliss." Here, in this present world, all is transitory and unsatisfactory. The utmost point of earthly enjoyment is vanity and vexation of spirit. He who grasps the most, grasps only a delusive shadow. Nothing beneath the eternal source of blessedness, God in Christ, can give abiding peace or joy. How endearing, then, are the words of the Savior; "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace." "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you; and that your joy might be full."

HEAVEN IS THE ASSEMBLAGE OF ALL THAT IS LOVELY AND EXCELLENT. There dwell the cherubim and seraphim; the angels and archangels; principalities, thrones, dominions, and powers. There will all the friends of Jesus, who have lived in successive ages of the world, meet in blissful harmony and adoring praise. There all the holy intelligences will have one mind, one voice, one will, one spirit. All will be filled with the love of God. All will be holy, and all will be inexpressibly happy.

The divine image, which is the real excellence and beauty of the moral creation of God upon earth, will be seen in all its glory, when the bride, the Lamb's wife, the church triumphant, shall be presented to the heavenly Bridegroom, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Oh! my soul, rest not day nor night, until the Lord makes you fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. To taste something of the blessedness of heaven, I need not travel in imagination over mighty kingdoms, or picture to my mind the varied beauties of air and nature; I must descend into my own heart, and there, in "secret silence of the mind," contemplate by faith the infinite loveliness of the Savior, until a flame of holy love warm every affection, and a beam of holy joy gladden every power of my soul. Such glimpses of uncreated glories; such tastes of redeeming grace; such views of Jesus and his great salvation, purifying the heart, and raising the transported spirit above this poor, polluted world; may well be called—a heaven begun below.

If it be heaven to behold God without a veil; to bear his image; to dwell in his presence; then the preparation for heaven, and the foretaste of it, must consist in beholding God now by the eye of faith, as revealed in his holy word; in being now transformed by the renewing of the mind; and in holding daily converse with him by a diligent perusal of the Scriptures and by prayer. This is the life of faith. All profession of religion, without this, is mere delusion. Such barren profession may be full of words, while destitute of works; full of notions, while devoid of holy affections; full of zeal for doctrines, while empty of all saving graces.

But Oh! how calm and tranquil is the humble Christian, who enjoys an assured hope of glory! He resembles a person standing on some mighty eminence.

Above him shines the sun, without an intervening cloud; while far beneath his elevated station, roars the dreadful thunder.

The great mass of mankind is compared in Scripture to the sea. This emblem is most accurate. The sea is always varying in its form; ever restless, ever fluctuating. Its waves, at one time, rage with tremendous fury; at another, they undulate in gentle motion, or subside into a peaceful calm. Thus the heart of man is compared to that element, which, with the most appropriate significance, denotes deceitfulness, instability, and change. In the blessed world of glory, which John saw, when wrapped in vision in the isle of Patmos, "there was no more sea." No turbulent elements, no ungovernable passions, no wild uproar to disturb its everlasting rest, no bar to communion or sweet communion among the heavenly hosts.

The true Christian is a citizen of the New Jerusalem. He daily walks with God by faith. His heart is separated from a vain and noisy world, through which he is indeed hastening, but to which he does not belong. He needs not to busy himself about its passing vanities, or to contend about its fleeting honors. He shuns the angry disputes of fiery politicians, and the crowds of maddening multitudes. He feels the force of the prophet's exhortation, "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth;" and seeks to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; well knowing that this is good and acceptable in the sight of God his Savior.

He has a nobler conquest to obtain than that which occupies the worldling's mind. He labors to obtain the conquest over himself; since "he that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit, than he that takes a city." He has to contend against those very evils which are fostered by the world, and which lead the heart directly from God.

He honors and obeys the laws. He cheerfully submits to the powers that be, not only because of punishment, but also for conscience's sake. He regards his neighbor's welfare as his own, and studies to be quiet, and do his own business. He wishes to "owe no man any thing, but to love one another." Love, he considers to be a debt which he should always be laboring to discharge, although he knows it can never be fully paid.

Such is the believer in Jesus. Such is the heir of glory. He is a son of peace, and is hastening to the mansions of peace. As his life is, so is his death. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

There is a world of rich delight,
Where warm affections glow;
Where reigns the everlasting light,
Where crystal waters flow.

Those happy saints securely dwell
From Satan's deadly power;
Their bliss no mortal tongue can tell,
"Unfolding every hour."

They dwell with Jesus, and behold
The beauties of his face
Secure in the celestial fold,
And crowned by sovereign grace.

From earth, and all its empty joys,
Blest Jesus, set me free;
How vain the worldling's painted toys,
Compared with heaven and thee!

You are my hope, my way, my bliss,
My glory, and my crown;
Descend, Oh blessed Prince of Peace,
And make my heart your throne.

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