

## Chapter Eleven

### *Whether the Souls departed enjoy this Rest before the Resurrection*

I have one thing more to clear, ... and that is, whether this rest remains till the resurrection before we shall enjoy it; or whether we shall have any possession of it before? ... I do believe, that as the soul separated from the body, is not a perfect man, so it doth not enjoy the glory and happiness so fully and so perfectly as it shall do after the resurrection, when they are again conjoined. What the difference is, and what degree of glory souls in the meantime enjoy, are too high things for mortals particularly to discern.... We can have yet no clear conceivings of these things. But that separated souls of believers do enjoy inconceivable blessedness and glory, even while they remain thus separated from the body, I prove....

Those words of Paul are so exceedingly plain, that I yet understand not what tolerable exception can be made against them: 'Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord' (2 Cor 5<sup>6-8</sup>).... As plain is that in Phil 1<sup>23</sup>. 'For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better'. What sense were in these words, if Paul had not expected to enjoy Christ till the resurrection? Why should he be in a strait and desire to depart? Should he be with Christ ever the sooner for that? Nay, should he not have been loath to depart upon the very same grounds? For while he was in the flesh, he enjoyed something of Christ.... And plain enough is that of Christ to the thief: 'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise'.... And sure if it be but a parable of the rich man in hell and Lazarus, yet it seems unlikely to me that Christ would teach them by such a parable, as seemed evidently to intimate and suppose the soul's happiness or misery presently after death, if there were no such matter.... Plain also is that in Rev 14<sup>13</sup>: 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them'.... How else is it said, 'that we are come to Mount Zion, the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem to

an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect'? (Heb. 12<sup>22-3</sup>). ...

Doth not Scripture tell us that Enoch and Elias are taken up already: and shall we think that they possess that glory alone? Did not Peter, and James and John see Moses also with Christ on the mount? – yet the Scripture saith Moses died; and is it likely that Christ did delude their senses in showing them Moses, if he should not partake of that glory till the resurrection? And is not that of Stephen as plain as we can desire? 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'. Sure if the Lord receive it, it is neither asleep, nor dead nor annihilated; but it is where he is and beholds his glory.... How else is it said 'that we have eternal life already'; that 'the knowledge of God (which is begun here) is eternal life'; 'And he that believeth on Christ hath everlasting life'; 'He that eateth this bread shall not die'....

Surely, if there be so great an interruption of our life as till the resurrection, (which with some will be many thousand years), this is no eternal life, nor everlasting kingdom....

It is also observable that when John saw his glorious revelations, he is said to be 'in the Spirit', and to be 'carried away in the Spirit' and when Paul had his revelations, and saw things unutterable, he knew not whether it were in the body or out of the body – all : implying that spirits are capable of these glorious things, without the help of their bodies.... We are commanded by Christ 'not to fear them that can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul'. Doth not this plainly imply that when wicked men have killed our bodies, (that is, separated the souls from them), yet the souls are still alive? ... Why is there mention of God's breathing into man the breath of life, and calling his soul a living soul? There is no mention of any such thing in the creating of other creatures, sure therefore, this makes some difference between the life of our souls and theirs....

It is a lamentable case that the brutish opinion of the soul's mortality should find so many patrons professing godliness, when there is so clear light of Scripture against them.... Yea more, the most of the nations in the world, even the barbarous Indians do, by the light of nature acknowledge that, which these men deny, even that there is a happiness and misery which the souls go presently to, which are separated from their bodies....

Believe, therefore, steadfastly, O faithful souls, that whatever all the deceivers in the world shall say to the contrary, your souls shall no sooner leave their prisons of flesh, but angels will be their convoy; Christ will be their company, with all the perfected spirits of the just; heaven will be their residence, and God will be their happiness....

SAMPLE

## Chapter Twelve<sup>1</sup>

### *An Exhortation to help others to this Rest*

Hath God set before us such a glorious prize as this Everlasting Rest of the saints is, and hath he made man capable of such an inconceivable happiness? Why then do not all the children of this kingdom bestir themselves more to help others to the enjoyment of it? Alas! how little are poor souls about us beholden to the most of us! We see the glory of the kingdom, and they do not; we see the misery and torment of those that miss it, and they do not; we see them wandering quite out of the way and know that if they hold on they can never come there, and they discern not this themselves. And yet we will not set upon them seriously, and show them their danger and error and help to bring them into the way that they may live. Alas, how few Christians are there to be found that live as men that are made to do good, and that set themselves with all their might to the saving of souls! ... I would have you, therefore, well understand what is this work which I am persuading you to....

The duty therefore I would press you to consisteth in these things following.

That you get your hearts affected with the misery of your brethren's souls; be compassionate towards them; yearn after their recovery to salvation. If you did earnestly long after their conversion, and your hearts were fully set to do them good, it would set you a work and God would usually bless it. Take all opportunities that you possibly can to confer with them privately about their states, and to instruct and help them to the attaining of salvation.... Set upon the work sincerely, and with right intentions. Let thy ends be the glory of God in the party's salvation. Do it not to get a name or esteem to thyself, or to bring men to depend on thee.... But be sure the main end to be to recover them from misery, and bring them into the way of Eternal Rest.... It is those that do it in compassion and tender love to men's souls, who do it in obedience to Christ, the most tender, compassionate Lover of souls, and who imitate him in their measure and place, who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Do it speedily; as you would not have them delay their returning, so do not you delay to seek their return....

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1. Part III.

Delay in duty is a great degree of disobedience, though you afterwards performed it: it shows an ill heart that is undisposed to the work. How many a poor sinner perisheth, or grows rooted, and next to incurable in sin, while we are proposing to seek their recovery! Opportunities last not always....

Let thy exhortation proceed from compassion and love, and let the manner of it clearly show the person thou dealest with that it hence proceedeth. It is not jeering, or scorning, or reproaching a man for his faults that is a likely way to work his reformation; nor is it the right way to convert him to God, to rail him and vilify him with words of disgrace. Men will take them for their enemies that thus deal with them: and the words of an enemy are little persuading. Lay by your passion, therefore, and take up compassion, and go to poor sinners with tears in your eyes, that they may see you indeed do unfeignedly pity their case. Deal with them with earnest, humble entreatings. Let them see that it is the very desire of your hearts to do them good. Let them perceive that you have no other end but the procuring of their everlasting happiness; and that it is your sense of their danger, and your love to their souls, that forceth you to speak.... I know it must be God that must change men's hearts, but I know also that God worketh by means, and when he meaneth to prevail with men, he usually fitteth the means accordingly, and stirreth up men to plead with them in a prevailing way, and so setteth in with his grace and maketh it successful. Certainly those that have tried can tell you by experience, that there is no way so prevailing with men as the way of compassion and love....

Another direction I would give you is this. Do it with all possible plainness and faithfulness; do not daub with men, and hide from them their misery or danger, or any part of it; do not make their sins less than they are, nor speak of them in an extenuating language; do not encourage them in a false hope or faith, no more than you would discourage the sound hopes of the righteous. If you see his case is dangerous, tell him plainly of it.... It is not hovering at a distance in a general discourse, that will serve the turn....

And as you must do it plainly, so also, seriously, zealously and effectually. The exceeding stupidity and deadness of men's hearts is such that no other dealing will ordinarily work. You must call loud to awake a man in a swoon or lethargy.... If ever you will do them good, therefore, you must sharpen your exhortation, and set it home, and follow it with their hearts, till you have roused them up, and made them begin to look about them. Let them know that thou

speakest not to them of indifferent things.... Labour, to make men know that it is mad jesting about salvation or damnation, and that heaven and hell be not matters to be played with, or passed over with a few careless thoughts.... What do you think on? The world is passing away; its pleasures are fading; its honours are leaving you; its profits will prove unprofitable to you; heaven or hell are a little before you; God is just and jealous; his threatening are true; the great day of his judgement will be terrible; your time runs on; your lives are uncertain; you are far behindhand; you have loitered long; your case is dangerous; your souls are far gone in sin; you are strange to God; you are hardened in evil customs; you have no assurance of pardon to show; if you die tomorrow how unready are you, and with what terror will your souls go out of your bodies! and do you yet loiter for all this? Why consider with yourselves: God standeth all this while waiting your leisure; his patience beareth, his justice forbearth; his mercy entreateth you; Christ standeth offering you his blood and merits; you may have him freely, and life with him; the Spirit is persuading you; conscience is accusing and urging you; ministers are praying for you, and calling upon you; Satan stands waiting, when justice shall cut off your lives, that he may have you. This is your time: Now or Never. What! Had you rather lose heaven than your profits or pleasures? ... O friends, what do you think of these things? God hath made you men, and endued you with reason, do you renounce your reason where you should chiefly use it? In this manner you must deal roundly and seriously with men.... I confess I have failed much in this myself; the Lord lay it not to my charge. Loathness to displease men makes us undo them.

Yet I advise you to do it with prudence and discretion. Be as serious as you can, but yet with wisdom; and especially must you be wise in these things following. In choosing the fittest season for your exhortation, not to deal with men when they are in passion, or drunk, or in public where they will take it for a disgrace. Men should observe when sinners are fittest to hear instructions. Physic must not be given at all times but in season. Opportunity advantageth every work.... Moreover means will work easily if you take the opportunity; when the earth is soft the plough will enter.... Christian faithfulness doth require us, not only to do good when it falls in our way, but to watch for opportunities of doing good. Be wise also in suiting your exhortation to the quality and temper of the person.... All cannot bear rough dealing as some can. Love

and plainness and seriousness takes with all.... You must be wise also in using the aptest expressions; ... if you clothe the most amiable beautiful truth in the sordid rage of unbecoming language, you will make men disdain it as monstrous and deformed, though it be the offspring of God, and of the highest nature.

Let all your reproofs and exhortations be backed with the authority of God. Let the sinner be convinced that you speak not from yourselves, or of your own head.... So much of God as appeareth in our words, so much will they take.... They can and may reject your words, they cannot dare reject the word of the Almighty. Be sure therefore, to make them know that you speak nothing but what God hath spoken first.

You must also be frequent with men in this duty of exhortation; it is not once or twice that usually will prevail.... If they be not followed, they will soon grow cold again. Weary out sinners with your loving and earnest entreaties; follow them, and give them no rest in their sin. This is true charity, and this is the way to save men's souls; and a course that will afford you comfort upon review.

Strive to bring all your exhortation to an issue; stick not in the work done, but look after the success, and aim at the end in all your speeches.... Labour therefore, to drive all your speeches to the desired issue. If you are reproofing a sin, cease not till you have got the sinner to promise you to leave it, and to avoid the occasions of it: if you are exhorting to a duty, urge the party to promise you presently to set upon it. If you draw them to Christ ... leave not till they have subscribed to the necessity of Christ, and of a change, and till they have promised you to fall close to the use of means....

Lastly, be sure that your examples may exhort as well as your words. Let them see you constant in all the duties that you persuade them to; let them see in your lives that difference from sinners and that excellency above the world, which you persuade them to in your speeches. Let them see by your constant labours for heaven, that you do indeed believe that which you would have them to believe. If you tell others of the admirable joys of heaven, and yourselves do nothing but drudge for the world, and are as much taken up in striving to be rich, or as quarrelsome with your neighbours in a case of commodity, as any others, who will then believe you, or who will be persuaded by you to seek the everlasting riches? ... Let not men see you proud, while you exhort them to be humble; nor to have a seared conscience in one thing, while you would have their tender in another. An innocent life is a continual, powerful

reproof to the wicked: and the constant practice of a holy and heavenly life is a constant disquietment to the conscience of a worldling, and a constant solicitation to him to change his course.

Besides the duty of private admonition you must do your utmost endeavour to help men to profit by the public ordinances.... And when you do enjoy the blessing of the gospel, you must yet use your utmost diligence to help poor souls to receive the fruit of it. To which end you must draw them constantly to hear and attend it. Mind them often of what they have heard; draw them, if possible to repeat it in their families. If that cannot be, then draw them to come to others that do repeat it, that so it may not die in the hearing. The very drawing of men into the company and acquaintance of the godly, besides the benefit they have by their endeavours, is of singular use to the recovery of their souls. Association breedeth familiarity, and familiarity breedeth love; and familiarity and love to the godly doth lead to familiarity and love to God and godliness. It is also a means to take off prejudice, by confuting the world's slanders of the ways and people of God. Use, therefore, often to meet together, besides the more public meeting in the congregation, not to vent and unsound opinions, nor yet in distaste of the public meeting, nor in opposition to it, nor at the time of public worship, nor yet to make a groundless schism, or to separate from the church where of you are members; nor to destroy the old that you may gather a new church out of its ruins, as long as it hath the essentials, : and there is hope of reforming it; nor yet would I have you forward to vent your own supposed gifts and parts in teaching, where there is no necessity of it.... But the work which I would have you meet about is this; To repeat together the word which you have heard in public; to pour out your joint prayers for the church and yourselves; to join in the cheerful singing the praises of God; to open your scruples, and doubts, and fears, and get resolution; to quicken each other in love and heavenliness and holy walking; and all this, not as a separated church but as a part of the church more diligent than the rest in redeeming time, and helping the souls of each other heavenward....

And now, Christian reader, seeing it is a duty that God hath laid upon every man according to his ability, thus to exhort and reprove, and with all possible diligence to labour after the salvation of all about him, judge then whether this work be conscionably performed. Where shall we find the man almost among us that setteth himself to it with all his might? ...