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# CHRIST'S DESIRE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

BY PROF. WILLIAM HENRY GREEN, D.D., LL.D.

*“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.”—JOHN 17:24.*

IF our minds were in perfect harmony with the mind of Christ our views would in many respects be greatly altered. Many things that we now desire and long for would lose much of their attractiveness; and other things that we dread and shrink from would cease to be unwelcome.

The great Redeemer is in this chapter giving utterance to the desires of his heart on behalf of his people. And the closing petition, the crowning one of all, is that they might be with him to behold his glory. He had been with them here in his humiliation and life of toilsome sorrow. But the termination of his work on earth was now rapidly approaching, and he was shortly to leave the world and enter into his glory. The anticipated departure of their Lord, whom they loved and upon whom they

leaned for more, far more, than any merely human friend or teacher could have brought them, had filled their hearts with sadness and grief. How lonely, cheerless, helpless would they be in this world if Jesus were taken away from them! But the separation, which grieved them so much, shall not last forever. It is his will that they should be with him where he is. The last and highest blessing that he solicits for them is their removal from earth to heaven.

This is desirable in the first place that they may be delivered from the contact and contamination of evil. He had before prayed that while they were in the world they might be kept from the evil which so abounds in it. It is a priceless benefit to have a divine shield interposed between us and all surrounding dangers; to be enabled to walk dryshod through the very midst of the tempestuous sea, and while the waves thereof roar and are troubled, and its billows threaten to engulf us, to find that they are held back by an almighty arm and a pathway cloven before us, so that we can pass unharmed along our perilous way. It is an inestimable blessing to have divine guidance and heavenly supplies in the desert, the cloud and the fire going before us in the trackless waste; and while on every hand nothing appears but barren and arid

sands, in the midst of which it seems as though we must certainly famish and perish from thirst, to find that the clouds are bidden to rain down food upon us day by day and the rock to pour forth its cooling streams. But the beneficence is more complete which not merely guards and protects in the midst of evils, but dissipates and removes the evils themselves; which brings the people safely to the shore beyond the reach of the angry waves of the sea; and which leads them out of the waste and howling wilderness and fixes their secure abode in the land flowing with milk and honey.

This is a world of evil, and evil is inseparably connected with every condition here. Blessed be God, it is not a world of unmingled evil. There is much in it to be grateful for; much that is good and holy and pure; much that turns our thoughts to God; much that is adapted to help us upward toward him and to quicken and stimulate us in his service. There is the converse and companionship of the good. There are those among us who deserve to be styled the excellent of the earth, whose spirit is pure and Christ-like, whose conversation is in heaven, who breathe a heavenly atmosphere, and their faces are radiant from their devout and holy intercourse with God. We find it not only delightful and refreshing, but elevating and ennobling, to

come into contact with them. We cannot be with them without being sensibly warmed by the glow of holy affections which burns in their bosoms, without having a livelier interest awakened within us in the things of God. We come forth from their society and find that the objects of faith have assumed a more practical reality to us; our convictions are freshened and deepened that the matters of eternity are really the great concern; and we have gathered new inward resolves that they shall henceforth supremely engage our thoughts and our activities. But we return to the companionship of ordinary men more on a level with ourselves, and we resemble a solitary coal drawn forth from among blazing embers and laid amidst lumps of ice, where it is speedily blackened and chilled. We relapse again into our customary state. We fall to the condition of those around us, above which our poor, weak aspirations are insufficient to raise us. The most of those around us are absorbed with the world—busily, eagerly pressing their earthly schemes, occupied with earthly cares, engaged in earthly pursuits, reveling in earthly pleasures, extolling the worth of earthly things, living as though this world were all. And they who have the love of God in their hearts hide it so far out of sight that we often scarcely feel the dif-

ference between them and others. And thus our friends, our associates, the companions of our daily life, go rushing on in the same heedless chase of earthly vanities, and we speed on with the multitude, unable to breast the current or to resist the accumulated pressure which sweeps us along with those who surround us.

Oh, to be lifted out of this fatal whirl, to be where we should be buoyed up and helped onward instead of being drawn downward by those who are about us! If those choice spirits who are so helpful to us could be with us always, ever lending us their aid, and theirs the only influences to which we were subjected! If we could be in a community made up of the good alone, where the love of Christ reigned in every heart and all were possessed of his pure and blessed Spirit, so that from the whole circle of our companionship should come only influences that were quickening, elevating, and purifying!

But such a community is not to be found in this world, which is one of mingled good and evil, and where too often the bad predominates. It is only in the heavenly glory that a society of unmixed good is realized. Into that world nothing defiled or that defileth shall ever enter; the companionship is with angels and the glorified spirits of the

just; all that pass thither from this world have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and all their weaknesses and imperfections have been removed. There all lips are vocal with the praises of Him who sits upon the throne, and of the Lamb; every heart is responsive to each utterance of the divine will; every breast swells with thankfulness and joyful gratitude for all the blessings of redeeming love; the image of Christ is reflected in every form; untarnished excellence radiates from all. How is it possible to move in such society as this without being borne aloft by the spirit which pervades the whole, without being ourselves absorbed in that one supreme, controlling object of interest which dwells in every heart, without kindling into admiration of that one theme which glows on every tongue, without gazing with fond delight upon that one center of attraction to which all eyes are turned, without sharing in the love and purity and holiness which everywhere prevail? There are the angels who shouted over the new-born creation and who have watched with growing wonder and delight the developments of God's plan of grace from that day to this; whose voices blended in that sweet chorus heard by the shepherds of Bethlehem when the Lord of glory was born a babe; who gazed with indescrib-

able amazement upon the astonishing scenes of Gethsemane and of Calvary; who saw the Son of God, when his humiliation was ended, reascend the skies and amid the acclamations of the entire heavenly host assume his seat on the right hand of God; and who have since gone forth with willing feet on numberless ministries of love to the heirs of salvation. There are the patriarchs, who have found the city of foundations for which they once looked and longed. There are the prophets, who eagerly watched for the coming dawn before the day had broken, and who foretold its future brightness. There are the apostles, who companied with Jesus in the days of his flesh. There is the noble army of martyrs, who suffered the loss of all things and gave up life itself for the love they bore his name. There is the entire array of those of every age, and out of every clime and nation, who have lived the life of faith and gotten the victory over sin and corruption; the real heroes, the true nobility of earth, living and dying in obscurity and poverty it may be, hidden from the sight of men, despised, maligned, suffering obloquy and reproach, of whom the world was not worthy, their names emblazoned on no scroll of fame, yet held in honor there and written in the Lamb's book of life. There, too, are our own kindred and friends who have de-

parted in the faith and hope of the Gospel, not as we knew them here in the feebleness of mortal clay, but transfigured and transformed, made equal unto the angels, made like to the Son of God himself. What a goodly assemblage is this, what a world to be introduced into! What invigoration to every holy principle, what stimulus to every right affection, what enlargement of soul, what confirmation in all that is right and good! What pulses of heavenly life would grow out of the very contact with the heavenly world! So that we can here see one reason why the loving Redeemer did not end his supplications when he had prayed that his people should be kept from the evil that is in the world; but he likewise adds, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

And then the world itself, in which we live, hampers and restrains us. All that we are conversant with here, our occupations, pleasures, possessions, bind our hearts to earth and hold us back from God. The visible, tangible, and outward obtrudes itself upon us at every turn. We are surrounded on every hand and at all times by sensible things; they force themselves upon our attention, they engage our thoughts. The necessities of our daily existence compel us to be largely occupied with them. What shall we eat, what shall we drink,

wherewithal shall we be clothed? are questions that are daily recurring and cannot be pushed altogether aside. But the spiritual, the heavenly, and the divine are out of sight and beyond the reach of any of our senses. It is only by faith that we are assured of them. It requires an effort to bring them before our minds, and constantly repeated efforts to keep them there. The clamor and din of worldliness so stun our ears that we fail to hear the appeals that God and eternity and salvation are making to us. And as the hand held near the eyes will shut out from sight the immense globe of the sun, so do the temporal and the fleeting and the unsubstantial things of earth, by sheer proximity, to a great extent exclude from our thoughts and our affections things that are eternal and unchanging, the true, enduring realities. We are fettered by sense, and we can no more emancipate ourselves from these bonds than we can rid ourselves of the law of gravitation and soar upward to the stars.

We are not, indeed, left wholly without help in this matter. We have the Word of God, revealing things to us in their just proportions, recording the unerring judgments of the Most High regarding earth and heaven, things present and things to come. We have the sacred ordinances and means

of grace, which are channels of divine influence upon our souls. We have our Sabbaths and seasons of devotion, when divine things do or should wholly engage our thoughts and are brought near to us; when the world, its scenes and cares, are shut out, and God and Christ and salvation occupy our minds. Nevertheless we are at an immense disadvantage all the while. We know that the earth is as a point compared with the vastly greater magnitude of the fixed stars that stud the nightly heavens. Yet, in spite of all that we know and believe, we cannot alter the fact that they do appear differently to outward sense. The world seems to be of enormous size, and the star but a twinkling, inconsiderable point. But if our position were changed, how would everything alter and adjust itself at once! If instead of standing on the earth we were transported to the star, that twinkling point would become the boundless globe, and this tiny earth would vanish out of sight.

It is possible, indeed, by divine grace to live even in this cold and frozen region. God can and does preserve his children from the evil that is in the world. There is a stunted vegetation in the midst of polar snows which continues to exist even in those dreary desolations, checked and benumbed in the long night and dreadful winter, but never

wholly extinguished ; so that when the sun returns—though his rays fall aslant and are shorn of much of their fervor—and the frozen ground is slightly thawed at the surface, these little plants peep up in their brief summer and put forth their tiny leaves and open their little buds, in a manner at once surprising and beautiful to behold. Yes, the abounding goodness of God has produced and maintains life even there, though all about is so deadening and uncongenial. And there are graceful forms of beauty to admire, and lovely tints and handiwork that speaks of the skill of the great Artist. The adventurous voyager who has pushed his bark amid the perils of the icy sea to that remote inhospitable region beholds them with astonishment. Yet they are weak and puny after all. They cannot be otherwise, from the conditions of their growth. The marvel is that they can exist at all. What are they in comparison with the size and beauty and endless variety, and rich, bewildering profusion and boundless range of tropical vegetation, where the fertile earth, warmed by the constant rays of the vertical sun, sends up its teeming products, covering continents with giant forests and a limitless expanse of verdure, gorgeously arrayed with painted bloom, grass, shrubs, and trees crowding every inch of space, decked with gay flow-

ers of every brilliant hue, boughs bending beneath their burden of luscious fruits, the air filled with agreeable perfumes, and the odor of sweet spices wafted from every side. Shall not the great Husbandman transplant what with immense care he has been nurturing here amid chilling blasts and inhospitable winters into the paradise prepared for them above, where "everlasting spring abides and never-withering flowers"? Into what new and vigorous life shall they not develop, what unexpected beauty shall they not unfold, what noble growths shall arise out of these sparse and stunted forms!

It is possible to maintain the life of God in this unfriendly world, though at this vast distance from our Father's house, the great realities removed from sight, and everything about us tending to draw us away from our true end. It is nevertheless possible to learn to see God in everything and to serve God in all we do, whether we eat or drink, still glorifying him; to live near to God at all times, to walk with him in all the concerns of every day as a man walketh with his friend, to grasp the eternal substance to the disregard of the fleeting shadows, even though these latter press themselves upon every sense and the former can only be attained to by an earnest struggle. It is possible by the grace of God to lead a life of faith, to walk by

faith and not by outward sense ; to resist the temptations to worldliness and self-indulgence and self-seeking which grow out of every circumstance of our situation, out of our necessary occupations, and out of our most innocent pleasures ; to hold out even against the solicitations of our great adversary, which beset us on every side, and the snares with which he would entangle us to our ruin. And what is the hardest of all, it is possible to maintain a successful fight against one's own inward corruptions. For we have to contend not only against the world and Satan, but against our own evil propensities and passions, against the law of sin which is in our members, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit struggling against the flesh ; ourselves at war against ourselves, treachery within leagued with foes without, so that we cannot be sure even of ourselves, and dare not trust ourselves. Our most dangerous enemies are, in fact, within.

And yet in spite of all and through all God's children may be kept, and are kept. God giveth them the victory. But it is at the price of incessant vigilance. It is by a perpetual struggle, and they carry on their warfare at fearful odds. They may be thankful if they come off with their lives from the desperate encounter. They cannot well avoid being scarred and wounded in the fight ; and

they will be obliged to drag themselves along in their forced marches, faint with fatigue and loss of blood, dispirited sometimes and almost disheartened, as though the war would never end. But it shall end, and end gloriously, too. Oh, what loud ringing cheers go up from the lips of the veteran soldier as he catches sight of the flag of victory, and sees the signal displayed which tells him that the ranks of the foe have everywhere given way in disordered rout! The field is won. The victory is assured. The weary campaign is over.

Friends gather tearful around the pallid corpse—the face in meek repose, the eyes closed, never to weep again, the bosom still, never to heave another sigh. But the glad spirit, which has taken its upward flight from that wasted form, is already singing its new-born song of thanksgiving and triumph before the throne, and rejoicing in the fulfillment of the Saviour's prayer, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

This prayer of Jesus looks, as we have now seen, to the deliverance of his people from a world of sin. It has another negative feature of great preciousness at which we must also glance before we can proceed to consider the positive blessings which it contemplates. This is also a world of suffering

and sorrow ; and when the Saviour prays that they whom the Father has given him may be with him where he is, he prays that they may be released from all the suffering and the sorrow that the world contains.

Not but there is much here to be thankful for, much true happiness, much to enjoy, many prolific springs of satisfaction and delight. This world has with the most benevolent regard to the wants of our nature been adapted to minister to our gratification. Every sense is an inlet of pleasure, and the objects are numberless from which this pleasure may be derived. Light is sweet to the eyes. The ear is charmed with melody of sound. Food has a relish, which delights our taste. Our intellectual nature is aroused and pleasurablely excited by the multitudinous objects of knowledge, which excite our interest and stimulate inquiries that are their own reward. Our social nature finds satisfaction in the company of friends and solace in all that is engaging and delightful in domestic life. And for our spiritual nature there is graciously provided the joy of salvation, the joy of pardoned sin, the joy of holy intercourse with God and communion with his saints, the joy of the Holy Ghost, which passes through every gradation from calm and peaceful frames to raptures that are unspeak-

able and full of glory. There are numerous sources of rich enjoyment in this world which it would argue criminal ingratitude to overlook or to depreciate. There are fountains of elevated and rational gratification at which we may drink and drink again. He who has a thankful heart for God's mercies will always find mercies in his lot to be thankful for.

And yet we cannot annul the fact that God has cursed the ground on which we tread for the sins of men. It brings forth thorns and thistles, and man must wring his bread from it by the sweat of his brow. He is born to trouble, and this is a heritage from which he cannot escape. He who expects perfect and unalloyed satisfaction here expects what never can be found. The same sensitive organization which renders us susceptible to pleasure exposes us likewise to pain. Every possibility of gratification involves a corresponding liability to suffering. Every added possession is a new liability to loss. Each glad anticipation shows us capable of its reverse, the poignancy of disappointment or the heartsickness of hope deferred. He who can smile can weep. Joys that bloom may wither on the stem, and the bright morning may be overcast with clouds. What anxieties gather around every valued treasure! Oh, the distressing

instability of earthly good! How it casts its baleful shadow over every scene of present enjoyment! Who knows what shall be on the morrow? Riches take to themselves wings and fly away. Friends that gather around us like the birds of spring may also, like birds of passage, take their flight. And the nearest, dearest group of all, the precious domestic circle—ah! each beloved form only presages the anguish of an additional parting that sooner or later must take place.

From this instability of earthly good, and exposure to privation and suffering, the people of God have no exemption. They have the same liabilities to pains and losses and griefs as other men. They have their full share of trials and afflictions. They are, in fact, characteristically, as a class, the afflicted and the sufferers. The petition of their Lord that they should be kept from the evil that is in the world does not screen them from outward troubles. On the contrary, our heavenly Father uses trouble and affliction as chastisements for their good; though for the present not joyous but grievous, they work out the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Through much tribulation it is ordained that they should enter into the kingdom of heaven. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." This is designed to pro-

mote their highest welfare by the infinite love and grace of him who doeth all things well. But the bitter is still bitter; and it makes us shudder as we swallow it, though we know there is healing in the draught. And the sorrows of God's children are no less keenly felt because they have learned submission to the divine will and reverently kiss the rod. The very tenderness of their heart makes them, in fact, more sensitive to the stroke; and it adds a new element of poignancy to their grief that *his* hand of love should have found it necessary to afflict them.

And then there is, besides, a large class of painful experiences which are peculiar to pious souls. There are inward griefs and apprehensions, and distressing doubts and fears, and painful struggles and mortifications, and penitent tears and bitter regrets over spiritual delinquencies, and periods of depression and darkness from the hiding of the Lord's face, and the lack of that sense of his favor which is essential to their inward peace. These are trials that the world knows nothing of, and yet which sometimes force from the wrestling, struggling child of God deep-drawn sighs and the half-desponding exclamation, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? When will the day dawn and the shadows flee away?"

Oh, what a blissful sense of rest shall possess the ransomed soul when this wearisome round of suffering is at an end—when the wandering exile has at last reached his Father's house, and the sorrowing child of God has found repose upon his Saviour's breast; the toils of life all ended, its burdens all laid down, the inward tumult stilled. Henceforth he shall have no more experience of pain or grief or woe, no aching brow, no fevered pulse, no wearied limbs, no load of care; beyond all reach of harm, safe from every foe, forever safe in heaven.

But I must not dwell here: I hasten to remark that the petition of our Lord reaches far beyond all that we have yet considered. Deliverance from this world of sin and suffering is but a preliminary implication in this comprehensive prayer. It is but the necessary antecedent to the blessedness which he supplicates for his people, not that blessedness itself. He prays that they may be with him and behold his glory. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. To depart and be with Christ, says the Apostle, is far better. To be with Christ, whom, having not seen, we love; and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. What rapture in the thought of beholding

the face of our Redeemer and our Lord, who from love to us forsook the glories of heaven to suffer and die for our salvation; to see the very head that was crowned with thorns, the hands that were pierced with nails, the face that sweat great drops of blood in the agony of the garden, the lips from which issued such words of grace and tenderness and compassion! To see Jesus, who snatched us from perdition by the sacrifice of himself; to whom we have clung by eager faith as our only hope for pardon and peace with God and everlasting life; that gracious Saviour, who has been our all-in-all, who has spoken peace to our troubled souls and whispered to our contrite hearts, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; who has borne with us in our weakness and our waywardness; who has cheered us in our hours of despondency and gloom; who has sustained and helped us by his grace and led us all along our course, and guarded and sheltered us and given us the victory, and shed his love abroad in our hearts, and purged us from our sins and delivered us out of all our fears, and prepared a mansion for us in his own blessed abode, and opened heaven for us and brought us safely there to be with him forever. Oh, with what bursting gratitude and joy and love will the ransomed soul gaze and gaze forever, unwearied, on the sacred form of him

who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, while his adoring amazement, glad surprise, and admiring, thankful love swell beyond all bounds. What higher idea can we have of supreme felicity than to be with Jesus where he is?

But the petition of the text proceeds "that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." The glory of the uncreated Son of God—what a transcendent vision must that be! It was a distinguished privilege to see the Son of God in human form in his lowly humiliation. The apostle John, who saw this form once lit up by the momentary radiance of the transfiguration, and who throughout his earthly ministry had seen the manifestations of heavenly love and grace daily beaming forth from the person of Jesus, writes of what was thus displayed on earth before his own eyes, "We have seen his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father." And our Lord said to his disciples that accompanied with him during his abode on earth, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them." To see the Son of God even when he walked in Judea and in Galilee in the form of a servant, and to feel that the man before us is really the incarnate God; to see tokens of a

power resident in him to which all nature yielded prompt obedience; to see the tempest hushed and the raging waves subside at his command; to hear that voice which opened the eyes of the blind and gave hearing to the deaf and life to the dead, and with divine authority could say to a weeping sinner, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"; to have him tell us of heavenly things who has been himself in heaven, and testifies what he has seen, and tell us of God, who had been with God from eternity, and was God; to behold him who is the very image of the invisible God, to observe the perfections of the Godhead mirrored in his life and coming forth in all his acts—what awe would possess our souls as we reverently gazed upon the form of God manifest in the flesh! And what an unspeakable privilege it would be to be permitted to feel in our own souls the power of that presence, and to place ourselves beneath the molding, quickening, saving energy which emanated from him. What a companionship would this be, beyond all parallel of privilege or blessing on earth! Such honor was granted to the early disciples of our Lord. But no mortal eye was ever permitted to behold his unveiled glory.

Earth has its brilliant spectacles, its grand and showy pageants, such as the splendors of a corona-

tion, when the resources of an empire are summoned to add magnificence to royalty. The monarch all ablaze with jewels and regal decoration; his attendant guards and princely retinue with brilliant and varied uniforms and streaming banners, with martial music moving in stately procession amid chiming bells and peals of artillery and surging masses wild with enthusiasm and rending the air with loud acclaim; the spacious and venerable halls proudly adorned; the imposing ceremonies, the insignia of royalty displayed, the crown and the scepter committed to him who holds them by hereditary right from a long line of kings traced back to remote antiquity, and representative of an acknowledged sway over widespread dominions and millions of loyal population—all this is grandly impressive.

But what is all the pomp and majestic greatness of earth to the splendors which surround the monarch of the skies? The brilliancy, which is feebly represented by the sun shining in its strength; the great white throne, and from the face of him that sits on it the earth and heavens flee away; the surrounding multitudes of the heavenly host, angels that excel in strength, celestial principalities and powers; thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before

him, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the ancient of days, his kingdom an everlasting kingdom, his word a word of omnipotence, his scepter swaying the universe; himself adored and worshiped and praised by countless multitudes of glorious and holy creatures, who ascribe to him without ceasing blessing and honor and glory and power.

Oh, the unimagined magnificence of the scene that opens to the gaze of him in whom the petition is fulfilled, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

And while the soul of the glorified saint is ravished by the sight of these divine splendors, it is chiefly the thought that this exalted glory is the glory of Jesus which transports him with the most supreme delight. The Saviour whom he has feebly tried to love, whom in his feeble measure he has sought to glorify, and in whose spreading kingdom here on earth he has found his liveliest satisfaction, is praised as he cannot praise him. How it rejoices him to see in place of the poor, unworthy tribute rendered to Jesus on the earth, the exalted homage of the skies; to see that Jesus is praised and adored by multitudes on multitudes, who honor him as he deserves to be honored and adored; to see that if the earth is slack in rendering him hom-

age, all heaven is vocal with his praise ; that such glory has been given him by his Father as is commensurate with the greatness of his redeeming work ; and that notwithstanding the poor, unworthy return which is all that he can render to this adorable and gracious Saviour, he has received an adequate reward for all his love and all his pains in the exaltation and glory which have in consequence been bestowed upon him. And if the ransomed soul, transported with the spectacle of his Redeemer's glory, can do no more, he can at least with a rejoicing heart add one more voice to the universal chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

But the rapture of gazing is not all that is linked with beholding the glory of Christ. How can one stand in the sunshine and not be illuminated, or approach the fire and not be warmed, or be set in constant contact with the beautiful and the true and not be instructed and refined? The glory of Christ is not a mere spectacle to be passively beheld, but a power ever radiating forth upon those who gaze upon it. It not only entrances with delight, it is transforming. Life, holiness, salvation, stream forth from him who is the fountain of life and healing. Even here at this vast distance, be-

holding in his Word as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image; the work of transformation and sanctification goes forward, though with much remaining imperfection. But there we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. To be with Jesus and to behold his glory is to be every moment drinking in with every sense the knowledge of him whom to know is eternal life. It is to be brought with no interposing hindrance into the most intimate communion and fellowship with him who is the overflowing fountain of all good, and by whom we shall be filled to the utmost of our ever-enlarging capacities with the fullness of God.

But we have not yet reached the limit of the Saviour's petition in the text. Though we have long since passed the boundary of all that the human mind can comprehend, or imagination can conceive, there is another particular yet to be added. We know not what we say when we utter it. We only feel that above these enrapturing heights of glory, of which we have been endeavoring to catch a faint and feeble glimpse, there rises yet another, higher and more glorious still.

When Jesus prays that his people may behold his glory, he means something more than that they should witness a spectacle, even with the added

thought that this spectacle should produce a beneficial and transforming effect upon them. He means not to have them stand like Moses on the top of Pisgah to view afar the enchanting prospect of the Canaan he should never enter. To "see death" is in Scripture phrase not merely to witness it but to experience it; to "see corruption" is to become a prey to corruption; to "see sorrow" is to be sorrowful; to "see good days" is to have a glad and joyful time; to "see the kingdom of God" is to partake of its benefits; and to "behold Christ's glory" is to be a sharer of that glory. "The glory which thou hast given me," says Jesus, "I have given them." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." The glory which beatified saints, behold, is their own. It is the glory of their Redeemer and their Saviour, achieved by him for them, bestowed by him upon them. They are one with him, and all that he has is theirs.

But we cannot scan, we cannot even trace the outline of these pinnacles of glory. The imagination reels and thought is bewildered, and the summits are hidden in the brightness of the throne itself. We cannot follow the luminous upward track of the ascending saint. He vanishes from our

sight in the blaze of ever-accumulating glory. We only know that the petition is fulfilled, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

Brethren, pardon one additional word. This is the end which Jesus solicits for all his followers; this is the result which he has contemplated from the beginning; this is the design of all his work for them; this is the design of all his work in them; this is the burden of his intercessions on their behalf. Is this what we are living for, and striving after, and reaching unto—the center of our hopes, the object of our desires, the mark toward which our struggles are directed? Is our heart fixed not on an earthly but a heavenly aim, and does this enter into our daily and constant thoughts and plans, so that heaven seems to us not a violent rupture of all that precedes, a sudden stop to our pursuits, an abandonment of cherished plans, a reversal of all that we were engaged in, but rather its legitimate, expected, longed-for consequence, the last step forward in the direction that we have been urging our way, and which puts the proper finish to our whole lives. Is our treasure in heaven, or is it on the earth? The answer to this question will reveal to which world we belong, and in which world we shall take our portion.