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The Sacrist's Victory

1 Cor. 15. 57 But thanks be to God who giveth us the Victory
thru Our L^d J. Christ.

To be deliv^d from if fears of Death, to pass into the Next
world, with serenity and Joy is an invaluable Privilege—
earnestly to be desired, and diligently ~~to be~~ sought after—

This only can be obtained, upon the principles of the Christian
faith, by an interest in the merits and Right^y—a conformity
to the precept and example of our B. Redeemer.

The Philosophers of the Gentile World often spoke with
of Death with a generous contempt, but they lookt upon it
in a false light— they fancied, it would either prove the total
destruction of y^e Nations— or translate them, to some
distant Regions, where they should inhabit flourishing Cities
and be regaled with an uninterrupted course of Sens^e Enjoyment.

The Heroes of the Age have oftentimes encountered Death, with
undaunted Bravery— even in its most terrible Appearance—
but then they were animated by a Principle of Vanity— They
pleased themselves with the thoughts— ^{of} ~~that they should~~ ^{that they should} ~~die~~ ^{die} in the bed
of honour— that these characters should be transmitted to
Posterity with distinguished glory—

Sometimes

[Be the most licentious part of mankind, soon to meet
Death with the greatest tranquillity— but this proceeds from
stupid insensibility— they have so long resisted the Method of
divine Grace, that at length they are given up to Judicial
Blindness, and final Impenitence—]

But to consider Death, in its true Point of sight, to behold
its near Approach, with unshuffled Composure— & to enter upon
an Invisible world with triumph^t Joy— this can be obtained—
Neither, by the false Maxims of Philosophers— The Affected bravery
of heroes— [nor the Chimerical Principles of divertment]

Nothing but the Power of our most holy faith, and the
sacred Influences, of the Spirit of Grace, can support the
minds of men, in this important exigence — in this hour of
difficulty and darkness —

But by these Almighty Supports — the meanest Christian
may triumph over the H^o of Terrors — I join with St Paul in
the undaunted challenge of my text — O Death I — Thanks —
In speaking to which words by Disaffection I shall consider

First — Who are they that obtain the Victory over Death

Secondly By what means they obtain this Victory —

First Who are they that obtain the Victory over Death —

Not all In General, for to the unbelieving an Impenitent —
Death is the most terrible Enemy — The Messenger of Divine Justice
— The Executioner of God's Wrath — an Introduction into Endless &
Intolerable Misery — These instead of gaining the Victory over
Death — become its melancholly Captives & its Eternal Prey —
They pass from the sorrows of a temporal — to a bitter pain of E^t. Death

But who then are the happy persons — They that
are united to the dⁱ. J. V. by a livⁱg faith — They that are the
subjects of a sanctifying Change — They that live in an untainted
subjection to the precepts of the Gospel —

I They that are united to the dⁱ. J. V. by a living faith —

All the invaluable benefits, that are purchased by the blood
of Christ and are conveyed in the New Cov^t are the peculiar
Privilege of those that are united to him — It is the inalienable
tenor of the Gospel, He that hath the Son hath Life & he that
hath not the Son hath not life — 1. John: 5. 12

The Pardon of our Sins the Justification of our Persons, a deli-
verance from the punishment of Death, is not the Privilege
of every common professor — but only of the real Christian — There
is no condemnation, to them that are in J^esus — I know not
him as St. James would

The Happ: of the heavenly world is limited to those that are
found among the number of his favourite People - Which
are the dead that die in the Lord, they shall live &c

The triumphs of the last day are allotted only to those that
are the living members of his Mystical Body - By an Adam all
die so in Christ shall all be made alive - all that are united
to him as his glorious head, and partakers of his blessed life -
shall live with him in glory - 1 Cor. 6: 9

This Union is formed in the day of our effectual Calling when
we are persuaded & enabled, joyfully to acquiesce in the Divine
designs of his grace, and cheerfully give up our selves to him
as our Compleat and Eternal Saviour -

II. They that are thus united to Christ, always pass under a sancti-
fying Charge - He that is joined to the Lord, of one Spirit - The Sp^{irit}
that quickned our Dead, and Refuses also in his chosen People
& keeps them from the death of sin to the life of Righteousness

By this Indwelling Spirit, they are brought out of a State of
Nature into a State of Grace, they are changed from carnal
to Spiritual Persons - Their Understandings are enlarged
to see the Beauty and excellency of the Supernatural Mystery
of the Gospel - They prefer, the Glory of the heavenly World
incomparable, beyond the shining Vanities of this transient
Earth - Their hearts are inspired with an Ard^{ent} Affection
after the favour of God as their highest ^{happiness} Ambition -
with an Incepsant Merit after perfect conformity to the
Divine will as the only perfection of their Nature - with
a disinterested Zeal to promote the Kingdom of the Redeemer
as the noblest Business of Life -

III. This sanctifying Charge is always accompanied, with an
unfeigned Submission to the precepts of the Gospel -

Then they profess Eminent degrees of faith, & stile themselves
the Regenerate People of God - It is the merciful be-
nevolence, of the Great God of the heavenly world, that will that

Now the L. J. v. gives his People Victory over Death —

I. By direct^{ly} to them a future world beyond the Region of the Grave —

Life is the first gift that we receive from our Heavenly Father and the foundation of every other Enjoyment — Death to all visible Appearance, deprives us of this invaluable B^l and brings entire destruct^{ion} on the humane Nature — No wonder q^d Dth is the Object of our Natural Aversion — No wonder we start at the Thoughts of sinking into a state of etern^{al} Silence & Obscurity —

Indeed some of the sublimest Geniuses of the broken world perceived thro' the clouds, that surrounded the mansions of d^ead & had some faint discoveries of a future world beyond the limits of the Grave — But to abolish the fear of Death we want a surer Guide, than the uncertain conjectures of our own feeble Reason — to convince us of the immortality of the Soul; we stand in need of higher Evidence than we can receive from the Schools of Socrates, and Plato —

This is what the L. J. v. has given us, he has brought Life & Immortality to light by the Gospel — This is not only one of the doctrines contain^d in his reveal^d word — but the foundation upon which is built, the whole System of our H^l Religion.

Why did the Lord of Nature make his first Appearance in a Palace instead of a Stable, & live a life of poverty & reproach ~~while he dwelt upon Earth~~ — but to teach his followers that his Kingdom is not of this world, but that in its ultimate tendency, it is to conduct them to the heaven^{ly} Inheritance.

Why did he exhort his Disciples, not to fear the rage of Insulting tyrants, nor the terrors of Dth itself — bec: their truth is confined, within the narrow bounds of this life — their Omnipotence cannot reach us into a future World —

Why did he command us, to deny our selves take up our Cross, and follow him in the path of Mortification — bec: if we follow the Example of his sect denying Love —

we shall partake of the glory of his exalted State — if we
suffer with him upon Earth we shall reign with him in
immortal glory.

The whole fabric of the Gospel is built upon the immortality
of the Soul — and indeed if in this life only we have hope ~~we~~
Your faith is vain — Our Preaching is vain, and the best of
Christians are of all men the most miserable —

This important truth our Lord not only taught by his Doctrines
confirm'd by his miracles, but unanswerably demonstrated by
his Death and Resurrection — he indeed suffered the pangs of
Death but rose again to a divine life — he entered the dark Sepulchre
lay in the grave but rose from thence a triumphant Conqueror —
to give us sensible evidence of a future life —

But what comfort do it afford mankind, to be assured of
a future state, if they have reason to fear that in that
state they shall be eternally miserable, — If at Death we
fall into the hands of an avenging God, the immortality of
our Nature, will only perpetuate our punishment — Therefore

II. Jesus Christ has not only directed us to a future state but
by his sufferings made atonement for our guilt, & so delivers
his People from the punishment they deserve.

I shall not attempt to decide that Question which so
confidently been debated in the Schools — Whether God could
pardon, ^{sin} & not demand satisfaction, without violating the
perfections of his Nature — I would be far from limiting
the Holy One of Israel — I desire not to be safe above what is written —

But this we must all acknowledge, if God has found out
a method to vindicate the honour of his Justice, and at the
same time to display the riches of his grace — to give the
whole world an evidence of his hatred to the crime, while
he pardons the criminal — to inspire the Sinner with an
holy fear — while he impresses him in the arms of his mercy —
This I say we must acknowledge is the most perfect and glorious

long Endued - Not by dying but saving others from the Dominion
of Death - Not by submitting to the power of darkness but
openly triumphing over them -

We may then certainly conclude that he died, not only
as a Martyr for the truth - Not only as an example to his
but as, a saved Victim to Satan's clutches for Sin -

This is further Evident by the manner of his Death -
If we look into the Annals of the Church, we shall find the
Primitive Martyrs, endured the severest tortures with Unshaken
Resolution, past thro' the most barbarous executions, with Rejoicing
of Joy, & from the Scaffold of Death, ascended as in triumph
through Chariot to the mansions of Glory -

But if we look into the ^{history} of Christ; we find, that
he trembled at the Approaching of Death, he was cast into
a bloody Agony at the dreadful Prospect of his Approaching
Suffering, & poured out earnest cries to his heavenly Father
that if possible, the bitter cup might pass from him -

Whence Arise this Astonishing difference
Not from any personal Guilt that attended our B. Lord
for he was the unsullied mirror of perfection -
Not from any unwillingness to perform the work he had Under-
taken, for it was his Meat and drink to the will of his Father
Not from any terrifying Apprehensions he entertained of
a future World for he knew that when, he had finished
the work of our Redemption, he should immediately receive
the Reward of his Sufferings - He knew that when he left
this inferior Earth, the Everlasting Gates of Heaven
^{would be} ~~were~~ Opened to give him a triumphant Reception
the General Assembly of S^ts & Angels were prepared to
congratulate his Return to his Native Glory -

But that encounter'd Death attended with all its formi-
dable terrors, the Martyr as a conq^r and disarm^d Enemy -

Christ app^r before the tribunal Justice to make
expiation for our Sins - The Martyr, before a Throne of
Grace - to receive the Blessings that he purchased by his Sufferings

Let then the Accuser of the Brethren, draw up a dread
ful Catalogue of our Crimes, presented before us, describe
them in their blackest colours, & expatiate upon all the
direful Aggravating Circumstances that attend them —
The Death of x.^c has made full satisfaction to Divine Justice
has completely answered the demands of the Law &
eternally redeemed his People from the Punishment of Sin —
Judge then may we triumph over Death since it is di-
armed of its sting, & has no longer power to hurt us —
Especially if we consider

III. Christ not only delivers us from the terrors of Death
but gives us a title to the glory of heaven — He has not
only ^{taken away} ~~removed~~ the ^{curse} ~~curse~~ ^{then} ~~then~~ ^{sting} ~~sting~~ of Death but changed it into a Blessing —
It was the Executioner of divine Justice, designed to punish
Rebellious Sinners, it is now the Messenger of Peace sent to re-
move us to remove us to our Native home — It was a gloomy
vale that led down to blackness & darkness — but it is now
a passage to a world of light and joy —

Thus Our understandings shall be freed from Ignorance &
Error, enlightened with the sublimest Knowledge of God, & the
mysterious dispensations of his Providence and Grace —

Our graces shall be delivered from every remaining pollution
and advanced to the highest degree of beauty and Perfection —

Our Bodies shall be finally delivered from the Empire of
the Grave and clothed with immortal Youth and Vigour —

God shall disclose all the Unsearchable Riches of his Grace
to purify and adorn our Natures — Christ shall display
the Attractive Charms of his Love, to complete and Per-
petuate our Happiness —

We shall be admitted into the delightful Society of
Angels glorified S.^s and Venerated Martyrs where
perfect Love, and uninterrupted Friendship reign forever —

And to ^{finish} ~~complete~~ the Scene Our Happiness shall be complete
in its degree & ^{eternal} ~~perfect~~ in its duration — Our Sun

will never suffer an Eclipse, Our day will never be darkened
with any melancholly clouds, nor our enjoyments mixed with
any disagreeable distasteful ingredient — We shall always
behold the smiling face of God, and triumph in the triumph
of his love forever and ever —

This it must be confessed is an happiness infinitely beyond
what we can at present conceive or comprehend — but it is
not as the reward of our personal merit — but as the purchase
of the invaluable merits of Christ. Not as a debt of justice — but
the gift of undeserved Grace — He that spared not his own
son but delivered him for us all, how shall he not with him
freely give us all things.

Why then O Faithful Disciples of Christ should you tremble
at the thought of death — which is only an Entrance to life Eternal
that we unwillingly to leave this Body the Seat of so many
pains and Discomfort — Christ has purchased for us a more
glorious body — that will be happily Exempted from ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{disorders of this} ~~the~~ ^{earthly}
~~Disagreeable~~ ~~Accident~~ — from the decays of Age — and the dem-
ands of Death —

Do we regret the loss of our intimate friends & Acquaintance
Jesus Christ will admit us into a vastly more agreeable Society
where there will be a perpetual communication of
the most generous offices of friendship and Love —

Are we loth to leave the transient Pleasures of Earth, I &c
will bestow, upon us those Rivers of Divine Pleasure & Comfort

Why then O My soul should I be unwilling to forsake
these broken Cisterns if I may go to the fountain of living
Waters — Why should I not O Adorable Redeemer, trace
thy sand footsteps — even thro' the most difficult path of
self denial — since thy lead to a crown of Immortal Glory —

I now pass to the Improvement of my Subject —

I. What Infinite Obligations are we under to the d. J. &c
What an astonishing Scene of sufferings did he pass thro' — What
unutterable torments did he undergo for the redemption of mankind —

Take a View of our Redeemer, when entering upon his
terrible Agony in the Garden — his Soul overwhelmed with
sorrow, his blood flowing down in streams to the ground —
his body prostrate upon Earth, in the posture of humble Suppli-
cation — Bound him Arraigned at the bar of the Roman
Governor, accused as an infamous Insult, and condemned
as a Blasphemer of God & an Enemy to Caesar — See him
delivered up to the Rage, ^{Wrath} Furies, of a Barbarous & Enraged
Multitude — Finally ~~bound~~ ^{bound} him lift up your Eye & and
behold him hanging upon a Cursed Cross — panting
bleeding and dying — No Wonder at this terrible Scene
the Sun was darkened — the Earth trembled — The Rocks
were rent — the Graves were opened — and the Dead
returned to life —

Whence this Condemnation of Universal Nature — Whence
these stupendous sufferings of the Son of ^{God} — It was to
vindicate the Honour of divine Justice, which we had
violated — It was to deliver Mankind from the ^{penalty} Miseries
that our Sins had Deserved — It was that we who are
by Nature the Sons of Death, might become the Heirs of
Immortality and Glory — O Unparalleled Love! In-
finitely transcending the most glorious Influences of
humane Affection —

He suffered Reproach, that we might be clothed with Robes
of Glory — He died that we might Live — He for a time ^{was} ~~left~~
deprived of the Light of the divine Countenance, that he might
shine up on us in the dark hour of Death and thro' the
brilliant Ages of Eternity —

What a Reproach is it to the Christian World, that so
few are delivered from the disquieting fears of Death —
a perpetual Objection of the behaviour of mankind, with Im-
mediate Conviction that they look upon Death as the greatest
of Evils — if their pulse beat with unfeeling Velocity —
if they have the least Symptom of approaching Sickness, it
in a moment casts them into a melancholy distemp' of Spirit —

When we are called to attend the sick and dying bed, or
our acquaintance; how often do we find them trembling
with fear - taking farewell of the world with regret, &
praying that the most tender mercies, that they may continue
a little longer upon Earth - When if they were Christians
indeed, and lived up to their saved Character, they would
welcome the approaches of Death with undiminished joy -
to receive it as the messenger of divine Grace, designed to break
their captive chains - to open the doors of their Prison -
to deliver them from the miseries of this mortal state, & to
bring them to the unspeakable felicity of the Kingdom of Heaven.

But we need not wonder that the thoughts of Death inspire
the greatest part of Mankind with terror and alarm.

If the Gospel required nothing of us, but that we should
make a profession of the Name of Christ - Believe that he died
upon the Cross to make expiation of the sins of mankind -
& when we come to the end of life - list up our voices and cry
aloud for mercy - Then every baptized Christian might meet
Death with comfort - and those who have spent their days in
securities, might in the last moments of life triumph over their
enemies.

But you know O My Brethren, that the Gospel teaches
you, that if you indeed belong to the Son of God - You must
be not only ready to renounce your sins - But also to
and with refusal - Deliberately to give up your hearts to Jesus
Christ as your Saviour & Lord - And Walk as becomes his
redeemed People in all holy conversation and godliness -

But the greatest part of the professing World are
neglectful in the duties of their hearts - & therefore do wonder
they are delivered up to confusion & fear at the hour of death.

Christ Jesus has indeed died not only and immolately
to light by the Gospel, but to comfort them that afford to you
whose affections are chained down to this Infernal Earth
and neglect all preparation for your future state -

