

THE HOLY LONGING

THOMAS WATSON



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A profound exploration of the soul's deepest yearning for communion with God, this Puritan classic examines the nature of spiritual desire and its transforming power in the believer's life. With characteristic warmth and precision, the reader is guided through Scripture's portrayal of holy affections — the restless hunger for divine presence that marks authentic faith. Rich in devotional insight and practical application, the work speaks to the gap between earthly satisfaction and heavenly longing. Essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the spiritual life and cultivate a heart inflamed with desire for the living God.



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TITLE PAGE



THE HOLY LONGING: Or, The Saints Desire To be with Christ: Delivered in a Sermon At **All-hallows Lombard-street**, August 24, 1658, At the Funeral of Mr. **Jacob Stock**.

By Thomas Watson Minister of **Stephens Walbrook** in the City of **London**.

I would not live always, _Job 7:16._

In this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, _2 Corinthians 5:2._

Mors porta gloriae. _Bernard._

London, Printed by **E. M.** for **Ralph Smith**, at the sign of the **Bible** in **Corn-hill**, near the Royal **Exchange**. 1659.

TO THE VIRTUOUS, HIS MUCH
ESTEEMED FRIEND, MRS.
ELIZABETH STOCK



Loving friend,

Though I was put upon some straits of time, (other occasions intervening when this Sermon was to be preached) yet at your request to me to publish it, and the desire of some of your Relations to whom I stand obliged, I knew not how in civility to deny. The subject of this following discourse, is, **The Saints desire to be with Christ**; and surely if **Christ be all in all**, Colossians 3. 11. all **marrow** and **sweetness**, no wonder that they who can claim a propriety, desire possession, and thirst after the embraces of that dear Saviour, **in whose presence is fullness of joy** as touching the present sad providence wherewith the Lord hath exercised you, let not your heart despond; though God allows you tears, yet you may not mourn **without hope**, nor **beyond measure**; let them that weep, **be as if they wept not**, 1 Corinthians 7. 30. If God hath given you Christ, you have enough, you need not envy any living, or over-grieve him who is dead; The star-light of Relations is superabundantly recompensed with the golden beams of this **Sun of righteousness**. If these few lines

ensuing may do good to any, adding some holy oil to the flame of their affections, ungluing them from the world, and fixing their hearts more upon the **Lord Jesus**, I have what I aimed at; I shall leave all to the blessing of the Almighty, and rest,

From my Study at **Stephens Walbrook**. November 3. 1658.
Yours, In all Christian service, THOMAS WATSON.

SERMON



Philippians 1. 23._ For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ which is far better.

We are met to solemnize the funerals of our friend deceased, and so perform the last office of love. A glass of mortality is here set before us, wherein we may see our own fragile condition. There is a sentence passed upon us all; **statutum est, -- it is appointed unto men once to die**, Hebrews 9. 27. So that our life is but a short reprieve from death, which is granted to a condemned man.

A wise man's life (said **Plato**) is nothing else but a contemplation of death. The Lord would have us accustom ourselves to dying thoughts, and as it were by meditation often to stretch ourselves upon our death bed. God clothed our first parents with skins of dead beasts, and feeds us with dead flesh, that so often as we see the death of other creatures, we might not forget our own.

The text presents to us Saint **Paul** in a holy **pathos**, or fit of longing to be with Christ. His heart was with Christ, and he wanted only the swift wing of death to carry him thither. **I am** (said he) **in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better.**

I shall briefly explain the terms as they lie in order.

I am in a strait betwixt two.

I am hemmed in, it may allude to a castle which is so straitly beleaguered and hemmed in, that it has no way to make a sally out. It fared now with Saint **Paul**, as with a woman that has her children at home with her, and her husband beyond the seas, she would gladly be with her husband, yet loath to leave her children: So **Paul** would gladly have been with Christ, but was loath to leave the Philippians, his spiritual children.

Having a desire to depart.

1. The Apostle does not say **oportet**, I **must** depart, but **cupio**, I **desire** to depart. All men must depart.

-- Pallida mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum Tabernas regumque tures. --

There is a dying principle in all; the frame and contexture of their body is earthly, and tends to a dissolution. **Nebuchadnezzar's image**, though it had a head of gold, yet **feet of clay**, Daniel 2. 23. Take the strongest man, let him be **Samson** or **Hercules**, of whom we may say as the poet, -- Illi robur and as triplex circa pectus erat. --

Yet he stands upon **feet of clay**; he is but **pulvis animatus**, and must moulder away in time, death will come with a **Habeas corpus** at last. **Tamerlane** a Scythian captain, **the terror of his time**, died with three fits of an ague.

The grammarian who declines all other nouns, knows not how to decline death. **Is my strength** (said **Job**) **the strength of stones?** Job 6. 12. Suppose it were, yet, -- **gutta cavat lapidem**,

-- the continual dropping of sickness would in time wear away this stone. There is no such thing as an earthly eternity; death is called **the house appointed for all living**, Job 30. 23.

But though death be in itself **necessary**, to Saint **Paul** it was **voluntary**; it was not so much a **debt**, as a **vote**; not so much **Paul's task**, as his **choice**; he does not say, I **must** be dissolved, but I **would** be dissolved. **Having a desire to depart.**

2. The Apostle does not say, having a desire to **die**, but to **depart**; a lenifying word which does much take off the sharp edge of death, and make it less formidable. This phrase [**to depart**] may refer

1. To soldiers that pitch their tents in the field, and upon the least word of command from their general, loosen the cords of their tent, and pluck up the stakes, and march forward. So death does but **loosen the silver cord**, which fastened the soul in its earthly tent, and a Christian marches forward to the heavenly **Canaan.**

Or, 2. This word [**to depart**] may be a metaphor taken from mariners, who loosen anchor that they may sail from one port to another: So **Paul** desired to loosen anchor; death to a believer is but **loosening the anchor**, and sailing from one port to another, from earth to heaven.

Beza renders this word [**to depart**] a putting off the harness. **Jerome** reads it, **migrare ex hospitio.** The world is an inn, we are travellers who take up our lodging here for a night, **Paul** longed to be out of his inn.

And to be with Christ.

The Apostle had three great desires, and they were all centered upon Christ. One was **to be found in Christ**; the other was **to magnify Christ**; the third was **to be with Christ**.

Here observe two things.

1. **Paul** does not say I desire to depart and be **in heaven**, but to be **with Christ**; it is Christ's presence makes heaven, as the king's presence makes the court. It is not the cherubim or seraphim which make paradise; **the Lamb is the light thereof**, Revelation 21. 23.

2. From the connection of the words, **having a desire to depart and to be with Christ**; we clearly see that the soul of a believer does not sleep in the body after death, (a drowsy opinion) but goes immediately to Christ. Upon the divorce of the soul from the body, there follows an espousal of the soul to Christ, 2 **Corinthians 5. 8. Absent from the body, present with the Lord**. It were better for believers to stay here, if they did not presently go to Christ after death. For here the saints are daily improving their graces, here they have many **praelibamina**, sweet tastes of God's love, so that it were better to stay here; and **Paul** wished that which would be to his loss, if the soul should sleep in the body, and not go immediately after death to Christ.

Which is far better.

A believer is no loser by death. His change is for the better; a science that is grafted into a better stock, and planted in a better soil is no ways damaged. A believer after death is set into a better stock, **Christ**; and is planted in a better soil, **Heaven**; this can be no loss, but an advantage. Well therefore may the Apostle say, to be with Christ is far better.

In the words there are these three parts. 1. Saint **Paul's** choice; **to be with Christ**. 2. The excellency of his choice; **it is far better**. 3. The **nodus**, or the strait he was in; **coarctor**, **I am in a strait betwixt two**; this holy man was in a great **dilemma**, he was straitened between **service** and **reward**. He was desirous of glory, yet willing to adjourn his own happiness, and stay out of heaven a while, that he might be a means to bring others thither.

From the words thus opened, there are three observations.

1. It is the desire of a true Saint to remove from here, and be with Christ.

2. To be with Christ is far better; how much better it is, we shall better understand when we are in heaven; some Angel is best able to speak to this point.

3. That which stays a Saint here in the World, is a desire of doing service; This did cast the balance with the Apostle, and was the only tempting motive to keep him here awhile, he looked upon his **abode in the flesh**, as an opportunity of service. **Paul** was willing to die, yet content to live, that he might be a Factor for Christ upon earth.

I shall at this time insist upon the first proposition. That it is the desire of a true Saint to remove from here, and to be with Christ; this proposition has two branches; of each distinctly.

1. It is the desire of a true Saint to be gone from here; **having a desire to depart**. What a wicked man fears, that a godly man hopes for. I desire says **Paul** to depart; a sinner cries **loath to depart**, he does not say **come Lord Jesus**, but Stay Lord Jesus; he would live always here, he knows no other heaven but this, and it is death to him to be turned out of his heaven. It was the speech of

Axiochus the Philosopher when he was to die, Shall I be deprived of this light? shall I leave all my sweet delights? **David** calls death a going out of the World, **Psalm 39. 13.** A wicked man does not go out, but is dragged out; he is like a Tenant who has gotten possession, and will not out of the house, till the Sergeants pull him out. If a wicked man were put to his choice, he would never come where God is; he would choose the Serpent's curse, **to eat dust**, Genesis 3. 14. but not **return to dust**. If a wicked man might be **voti compos**, have his wish, he would serve no other **God** but his **belly**, and to this he would ever liberally pour drink offerings.

But a soul enlivened and ennobled with a principle of grace, looks upon the World as a Wilderness wherein are fiery Serpents, and he desires to get out of this Wilderness. **Simeon** having taken Christ in his arms, cries out, **Lord, now let Thou Thy servant depart in peace**, Luke 2. 29. He that has taken Christ in the arms of his faith, will sing **Simeon's** song, Lord, let Thy servant depart. **David** prayed **to know the measure of his days**, Psalm 39. 4. because (says **Theodoret**) he desired to hear the good news of death's approach. The Saints of God have looked upon themselves as imprisoned in the body, and have longed for a Jail delivery.

The bird desires to go out of the Cage, though it be made of gold.

Hilarion chides himself that he was no more willing to die; Go forth my soul, what do you fear?

Ignatius was desirous of Martyrdom, that he might gain the presence of Christ in glory.

A Christian of the right breed is ambitiously desirous to put off the earthly clothes of his body, and make his bed in the grave; how is this bed perfumed with Christ's lying in it? A pillow of **down**, is not so sweet as a pillow of **dust**; a regenerate person looking upon himself as held with the earthen fetter of the flesh, and his soul put into a movable Sepulchre, cries out with **David, O that I had wings like a Dove, that I might fly away and be at rest.** Psalm 55. 6.

And indeed no wonder a true Saint does desire a dismiss, and is so earnest to have his Pass to be gone from here; if we consider how beneficial death is to a child of God, it puts a period to all his evils: in particular, there are ten evils that death will put an end to.

1. Death will put an end to a believer's sins. Sin is the great incendiary, it does us all the mischief. Sin may be compared to the Planet **Saturn**, which has a malignant influence; it is the womb of our sorrows, and the grave of our comforts.

Sin is the sinner's **bond**, Acts 8. 23. and the Saint's **burden**, Psalm 38. 3. How is a believer tired out with his corruptions? **I am weary of my life** (says **Rebecca**) **because of the daughters of Heth**, Genesis 27. 46. That which makes a child of God weary of his life, is his proud, unbelieving heart: Saint **Paul** could better carry his iron Chain, than his sins; **O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?** Romans 7. 24. When grace spurs the soul forward, the curb bit of sin checks it, and pulls it back again. There is much of the Old man in the new man; There is a party in every regenerate heart that is true to the Devil; a party that will not pray, that will not believe. A Christian is like a bowl with a double bias, he has an earthly bias upon his will, and a spiritual bias, and these draw him several ways; **the evil I**

would not, that do I, Romans 7. 19. Sin mingles itself with our holy things; we cannot act either our duties or our graces without sin; we are like children who cannot write without blotting! The sweet Rose of grace does not grow without its prickles? No wonder then a believer desires to depart; death will free him from his spiritual distempers; when he has done breathing, he shall have done sinning.

2. Death will put an end to a believer's temptations. Our whole life (says **Austin**) is nothing but a temptation; we tread upon snares: Satan is ever casting in the Angle of a temptation, to see whether we will bite; he knows how to suit his temptations; he tempted **Achan** with a wedge of gold; he tempted **David** with **beauty**; we cannot lock the door of our heart so fast by prayer, but a temptation will enter: Sometimes Satan comes more furiously, as a **Red Dragon**; sometimes more slyly, as a Serpent; sometimes he baits his hook with Scripture, and tempts to sin under a mask of Religion, as when he tempts to evil, that **good may come of it**. Thus can he **transform himself into an Angel of light**.

Is it not a grievous thing for a Virgin to have her chastity daily assaulted? Is it not sad to have the Devil's bullets continually flying about our ears? No wonder then a believer is willing **to depart**; death will set him out of gun-shot, he shall never be troubled with Satan's **fiery darts** any more; though grace puts a child of God out of the Devil's possession, it is death only frees him from the Devil's temptation.

3. Death will put an end to a believer's fears. Fear is the soul's palsy; **there is torment in fear**, 1 John 4. 18. **Cicero** calls fear one of the three plagues of Mankind; and the best of the Saints are haunted with this evil spirit; they cannot **rejoice** without **trem-**

bling; the believer fears lest his heart should put a cheat upon him, he fears God does not love him, he fears lest he should tire in his march to heaven; the best faith may sometimes have its fears, as the best stars have their twinkling. These fears (as **Socrates** said) arm a man against himself; they are very afflictive, leaving sad impressions of melancholy behind. No wonder then a believer longs to depart out of this life; why should he fear that which frees him from fear? The **King of terror** makes all fear vanish.

4. Death will dry up a believer's tears, **Revelation 7. 17. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes**; weeping is nothing but a cloud of sorrow gathered in the heart, dropping into water. A Christian often has none to keep him company, but his own griefs and sorrows; he sits as **Israel by the Rivers weeping**; as soon as the child is born, it weeps; when **Moses** was born, he was laid in an Ark of bulrushes, where he did as it were baptize himself with his own tears, **Exodus 2. 6. And behold the babe wept**; ever since we looked upon the Tree of knowledge, our eyes have watered; there are many things to occasion weeping.

—quidque facis lachrymis opus est.—

1. **Our sins**; who can look into his own heart with dry eyes?

2. **Loss of relations**, which is like the pulling a limb from the body; **Joseph** wept over his dead father, **Genesis 50. 1**. Well then, it is not to be admired that a believer desires to depart from hence; he shall leave the **valley of tears**; the **bottle of tears** shall be stopped; his water shall be turned into wine, his mourning into music, his lamentations into Hallelujahs: death is the handkerchief to wipe off all tears.

5. Death will put an end to a believer's molestations; **man is born to trouble**, Job 5. 7. He is the natural heir to it. This life is subject to injury; we do not (as **Seneca** said) **finish** our troubles while we live here, but **change** them. **Quisque suos patimur manes**. Every one has his cross to carry; sometimes poverty pinches, sometimes sickness tortures, sometimes lawsuits vex; man is like a tennis ball, bandied up and down by providence; while wicked men are in the world, never look for rest. These **troubled Seas** (as the Prophet calls them) will be casting forth their foam and mire upon the godly; and well then may a believer say his **Nunc dimittis, Lord, now let Thou Thy servant depart**. Death gives a child of God his **quietus est**, it sends him a Writ of ease, **Job 3. 17. There** (that is, in the grave) **the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest**.

6. Death puts an end to a believer's cares. Care is vexatious and anxious, it eats out the comfort of life; the Greek word for care, comes from a primitive that signifies to cut the heart in pieces; care does fret as a canker, it tortures the mind, it breaks the sleep, it wastes the spirits, this is the rack which the soul is stretched upon. It is hard, I had almost said impossible, **to shake off this viper** of care while we live; all our comforts are **careful comforts**; care is to the mind, as a burden to the back, it loads the spirits, and with overloading sinks them; care is a fruit of the curse; **Adam's** want of care, has brought us to care; have you not sometimes seen the briar growing by the honeysuckle, so that you cannot well gather the honeysuckle, but you are scratched with the briar? Thus in gathering riches, how is the head and heart pricked with care? And is there not great reason why a child of God should desire to depart? Is it good being among the briars? Death is the

cure of care; we are thoughtful and solicitous how to get such an estate, how to provide for such a child; now death comes to a believer as a friend, and says, Never perplex and distract your mind thus, I will free you from all these heart-killing cares; I will strike but once, and that stroke shall relieve you.

7. Death will put an end to the night of desertion; **Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled,** Psalm 30. 7. The soul in desertion, is within an inch of despair; in affliction the world is against a man, in temptation Satan is against a man, in desertion God is against a man. **Alstead** calls desertion an **agony of conscience;** this made the Prophet **Jonah** call the whale's belly **the belly of hell,** because he was deserted there; **Jonah 2. 2, 4. Out of the belly of hell cried I, then I said I am cast out of Thy sight.**

Heman grew distracted upon the suspension of God's favor, **Psalm 88. 16. While I suffer Thy terrors, I am distracted;** but death will free from desertion: a believer after death shall never see any more eclipses; God will draw aside the curtain, and pull off his veil, and the soul shall be forever sunning itself in the light of God's countenance.

8. Death will put an end to the imperfections of nature. Our natural knowledge is very imperfect; the most perceptive, intelligent person, may say as **Agur,** Proverbs 30. 2. **I have not the understanding of a man.** Since the fall, the lamp of reason burns dim; there are many **arcana naturae,** knots in nature that we cannot untie. Why **Nilus** should overflow in summer, when by the course of nature waters are lowest; why the lodestone should incline to the pole star; why the Sea should be higher than the earth, yet not drown it. **How the bones grow in the womb,**

Ecclesiastes 11. 5. Many of these things are riddles and paradoxes; by eating of the **Tree of knowledge**, we have lost the **key of knowledge**; how are we maimed in our intellectuals! By the fall we have lost our headpiece; there are some diseases which would make **Galen's** head ache to find out. The River **Euripus** was too deep for **Aristotle**; the Poet could say, *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.*—

Socrates said on his death-bed, there were many things which he had yet to learn; our knowledge is like the twilight, dim and duskish: the greatest part of our knowledge, is not so much as the least part of our ignorance, all which considered, no wonder to hear this language from a Saint, **cupio dissolvi, I have a desire to depart**; death crowns a Christian with fullness of knowledge; when he is snuffed by death, the candle of his understanding will burn brighter; at death a child of God does perfectly recover the use of his reason.

9. Death will put an end to the imperfections of grace; our graces are our best jewels, but here they are in their infancy and minority; therefore the Saints are said to receive but **primitias Spiritus, the first fruits of the Spirit**, Romans 8. 23. The best Christian is like a child put out to nurse, he is very weak in grace, faith is feeble, love lukewarm; grace though it be not dead, it is sickly, **Revelation 3. 2. Strengthen the things which are ready to die**; grace is like gold in the ore, drossy and impure; the most refined soul has some dregs; this motto may be written upon a Christian's graces;—**plurima desunt**—he that shoots furthest in holiness, comes short of the mark of perfection; well then may a

believer desire to be dissolved, death will free him from all the imperfections of his holiness; it will make him pure as the Angels, not having **spot or wrinkle**, Ephesians 5. 27.

10. Death will put an end to a weary Pilgrimage; we are here in a pilgrim condition, 1 **Peter 2. 11**. A Christian walks with his Pilgrim's staff in his hand, the staff of the promise in the hand of faith; now death will put an end to this Pilgrimage; it takes away the Pilgrim's **staff**, and sets a **crown** upon his head; no wonder that the gracious soul cries out with Saint **Paul, having a desire to depart**.

Objection. But against this it may be objected, some of the Saints have prayed against death; **Hezekiah** when the message of death was brought, prayed against it, and **wept sore**, Isaiah 38. 2, 3. so that **Hezekiah** had not a desire to depart.

Answer 1. Hezekiah did not pray simply against death, but in a limited sense, **at that time**; there might be several reasons assigned why at that time death was not welcome to him.

As, 1. **Hezekiah** desired to live awhile longer, that he might do more work for God, **verse 38. The dead cannot praise Thee**; intimating, that if he had been then taken off by death, he was capable of doing God no more service; he was loath to be cut down, till he had borne more fruit. Besides, had he then died in the infancy of Reformation, the adversaries of God would have insulted, and made songs of triumph at his Funeral.

2. **Hezekiah** was unwilling to die at that time, because he wanted issue. God had promised to **David, 1 Kings 8. 25**. That those of his line which were godly, should not want some of their seed to succeed them in the Throne; now in this respect it was a

great discomfort to **Hezekiah** to die childless; for he might have thought himself no better than a hypocrite, inasmuch as God had promised issue to the Kings of **David's** line that feared him. Upon these, and other considerations, **Hezekiah** might pray against death at that juncture of time.

And whereas it may be said that many of God's children are unwilling to die. I answer, a Christian is a compounded creature, **flesh and spirit**, and from this composition there may be a conflict between the fear of death and the desire of death, but at last the spiritual part prevails; and as faith grows stronger, fears grow weaker; thus it was with **Paul, having** a desire to depart.

So much for the first branch of the doctrine, that it is the desire of a true Saint to be gone from hence; [**having a desire to depart.**]

2. I proceed now to the second branch of the doctrine, that it is a Saint's desire to be with Christ. Saint **Paul** longed to lie on that soft pillow where **John** the beloved Disciple did, **namely the bosom of Jesus**; There had been little comfort in **departing**, if the Apostle had not put in this word, **to be with Christ**. Death will make a glorious change to a believer; it is but crossing the **mare mortuum**, the **dead Sea**, and he shall be with Christ. Death to a child of God is like the Whirlwind to the Prophet **Elijah**, it blew off his mantle, but carried the Prophet up to heaven. So death is a boisterous wind which blows off the mantle of the flesh, (for the body is but the mantle the soul is wrapped in) but it carries the soul up to Christ; the day of a believer's dissolution, is the day of his coronation. Though death be a **bitter cup**, here is sugar at the

bottom, it translates the soul of a believer to Christ; though the flesh calls death **the last enemy**, yet faith calls it **the best friend**, it brings a man to Christ, which is **far better**.

This word, **to be with Christ**, implies three things, Intuition. Fruition. Duration.

1. To be with Christ, implies, **Intuition**, 1 John 3. 2. **We shall see him as he is**; here we see him as he is not; he is not mutable, he is not mortal; in heaven we shall see him as he is. When **Socrates** was to die, he comforted himself with this, that he should go to the place where he should see **Homer** and **Musaeus**, and other Worthies who lived in the Age before him. A believer may comfort himself with this, that he shall see Christ; here we see him but through a **glass darkly**; but what will it be, when he shall be bespangled in all his Embroidery, and shall show forth himself in his full glory to his Saints! He in **Lucian** said to his friend, I will show you all the glory of **Greece**, when you have seen **Solon**, you have seen all: So he that sees Jesus Christ, sees all the glory of Paradise, Christ being the mirror of beauty, the quintessence of happiness.

Some ask the question how and in what manner we shall see Christ, whether we shall see his Godhead with bodily eyes? It is not good **to be wise above what is written**; thus far I think may with modesty be asserted, that we shall with our bodily eyes, behold Christ's **human nature**! His glory as a Mediator shall be visible to the Saints, and shall be beheld by glorified eyes; in this sense that Scripture is to be understood, **Job 19. 25. with these eyes shall I see God**; great and amazing will that glory be which shall sparkle from the human nature of Christ; if his **transfiguration** was **so** glorious, what will his **inauguration** be. **Austin**

wished that he might have seen three things before he died; **Paul** in the Pulpit, **Rome** in its glory, and Christ in the flesh; but what were that to this sight of Christ in heaven? We shall behold not a **crucified** body, but a **glorified** body.

2. To be with Christ, implies **Fruition**; we shall not only **see** him, but **enjoy** him: therefore in Scripture the Saints are said not only to behold him, but to be glorified with him, **Romans 8. 17.** and glory is said not only to be revealed **to** us, but **in** us, **Romans 8. 18.** And **enter thou into the joy of thy Lord**, Matthew 25. 21. not only see it, but enter into it. A man may see a fair Arbor drawn upon the Wall, but he cannot enter into it; this glory of heaven may be entered into; as the sponge sucks in the wine, so there shall be a libation and sucking in of glory; from this fruition of Christ, a torrent of divine joy will flow into the soul.

3. To be with Christ, implies **Duration**, 1 Thessalonians 4. 17. **So shall we ever be with the Lord**; the fashion of the world **passes away**, 1 Corinthians 7. 31. Earthly comforts though they may be **sweet**, they are **swift**; **Plutarch** reports of **Alexander** that he caused to be painted on a Table a Sword within a Wheel: implying, that what he had gotten by his Sword was subject to be turned about with the Wheel of providence; if we had the longest Lease of these things, it would soon be run out; but this privilege of being with Christ, runs parallel with eternity: **so shall we be ever with the Lord.**

Use 1. See from here the difference between a believer's departing and a wicked man's departing; to a believer it is a happy departing, to a wicked man, it is a sad departing, there's nothing but departing; he departs out of this life, and he departs from Christ, **depart from me you cursed**; he departs from **beams of**

glory, into **flames of fire**; he departs from the society of Angels, into the fellowship of Devils, **Matthew 25. 41**. He has never done departing; it is **mors sine morte**, the wicked shall be ever consuming, yet never consumed; they may tremble to think of departing, well may **the mourners go about the street** when a wicked man dies; hell may rightly be called **bochim** the place of weepers.

See how little cause a child of God has to fear death, when it carries him to Christ. This is a deathbed cordial; we are naturally possessed with a strange kind of palpitation and trembling at the thoughts of death, as if we were in a shaking palsy, whereas there is nothing more really advantageous to a Christian; death is a bridge that leads to the Paradise of God; all the hurt that death does to a believer, is to carry him to Christ, and is not that **far better?** Death pulls off the rags of the body, and puts Christ's Robes upon the soul. The serious consideration of this would make a believer above the desire of life, and the fear of death.

Objection. But may a child of God say, I could rejoice at the **gain** of death, but I fear the **pain** of death. I desire the Haven, but I tremble at the voyage.

Answer 1. In other cases we do not refuse pain; there is pain in the setting of a bone, in the lancing of a sore, yet we endure the pain contentedly, because it is **in ordine ad sanitatem**, in order to a cure. Death is a healing thing, it will cure a Christian of all his wounds; by making one issue, it cures all the rest.

2. Do we endure no pain at all in our life? **Job** felt so many miseries, that he did choose rather to die than live, **Job 7. 5 and 15. My flesh is clothed with worms, my skin is broken and**

become loathsome, so that my soul chooses strangling and death, rather than life; the life of man is a continual **calastrophe** and is interwoven with miseries: some have felt more pain in their life, than others have at their death.

3. What are a few pangs of death, compared with the pangs of a guilty conscience, or with the flames of hell, which God has freed a believer from? How **light** is death compared with the **weight of glory**? 1 Corinthians 4. 17. how short, in respect of eternity? **The present suffering is not worthy of the glory which shall be revealed in the children of God,** Romans 8. 18.

4. We make death more than it is; as the **Moabites** thought the **waters** had been **blood**, when they received only a color and tincture from the Sunbeams, 2 **Kings 3. 23.** we fancy death worse than it is, we look upon it through a multiplying glass; fear makes a Christian see double; shut the eye of sense, and open the eye of faith, and death will appear less formidable.

Use 2. Let us then put ourselves upon a scrutiny and trial whether we are persons that shall go to Christ when we die? It is certain we shall **depart**, but the question is whether shall we go to Christ?

Question. How may that be known?

Answer. If we are **in Christ** while we live, we shall go to Christ, when we die; union is the ground of privilege; we must be **in** Christ, before we can be **with** Christ; many hope to go to Christ when they die, but they are not **in** Christ; are they in Christ that do not know him? Are they in Christ that hate him in his Ministers, in his Ordinances? Oh labor to be in Christ.

Question. How is that?

Answer. By faith; faith is the uniting grace, it is as **Chrysostom** speaks; it is the vital, radical, cardinal grace: this gives the interest. Faith is the queen of the graces; by faith we take Christ as a husband, and give up ourselves to him as a Lord; faith is a Christ appropriating grace; it has both a relying and an applying faculty; Christ is the Ring, faith is the finger that puts on this Ring; faith opens the orifice in Christ's sides, and drinks in his blood; faith is both justifying and sanctifying; it fetches blood out of Christ's sides to pardon, and water out of his sides to purge, 1 **John** 5. 6. Oh with all gettings get faith.

Question. But there is much deceit about this grace? The Cyprian Diamond (says **Pliny**) looks like the true Indian Diamond, but it is not of the right kind, it will break with the Hammer. The Devil has his bad wares, and counterfeit graces to put off; how therefore shall we know a true faith from a false and spurious?

Answer. I shall give you two differencing notes.

1. True faith is ever found in a heart deeply humbled for sin, **Acts 2. 37. they were pricked at their hearts;** here was the first budding of faith; you never saw a flower grow out of a stone, nor faith out of a heart of stone. Faith is a herb that grows always in a moist soil, in a weeping eye and a broken heart; **Mark 9. 24. The father of the child cried out with tears, Lord I believe.** This flag of faith grows in the water.

2. True faith is operative; the Lapidaries say there is no precious stone but has **virtutem insitam**, some virtue latent in it; so we may say of **precious faith;** it has hidden virtue in it, it is very operative, it works out sin, **Acts 15. 9.** It works by love,

Galatians 5. 6. it is full of good works, **James 2. 17.** it makes the tongue speak for Christ, the head study, the hands work, the feet run **in the ways of his commandments**; faith comes with power upon the heart, 2 **Thessalonians 1. 11. The work of faith with power**, it has a restraining and constraining power; by this we may know whether ours be a true faith or no. I have read of a father who had three sons, and being to die, he left in his Will all his estate to that son who could find his Ring with the Jewel which had a healing virtue; the case was brought before the Judges, the two elder sons counterfeited a Ring, but the younger son brought the true Ring, which was proved by the virtue of it, whereupon his father's estate went to him; to this Ring I may compare faith, there is a counterfeit faith in the world, but if we can find this Ring of faith which has the virtue in it, both purgative and operative, this is the true faith which does interest us in and entitle us to Jesus Christ, and if we are **in** Christ while we live, we shall be **with** Christ when we die; where faith gives a propriety, death gives a possession.

Use 3. Here is then comfort in the death of our religious friends, though they depart from us, yet they go to Christ which is far better; we should mourn for them who are living, yet dead in sin; and rejoice for them who are dead, yet live with Christ. This our dear brother interred, had holy pangs of desire which seemed no less strong than the pangs of [illegible] he panted after God as his ultimate and supreme perfection; he did often with joy repeat the words of the Text, and seemed to roll them as honey under his tongue; we may therefore entertain good hopes of him that he is placed in that Paradise of God which he thirsted after, I wished him to look up to the merits of Christ; I must (says he) rest there

or nowhere. O what a comfort is this to think that our friends are not only **taken away from the evil to come**, but that they are with Christ; why should we be sad at their preferment? They have their **Crown, 2 Timothy 4. 8.** their **Throne, Revelation 3. 21.** their **white Robes, Revelation 7. 9.** Why should we weep immoderately for them who have **all tears wiped from their eyes?** they **enter into the joy of their Lord;** and why should we be swallowed up of grief for them who are swallowed up of joy; they that **die in the Lord,** are not **amissi,** but **praemissi,** they are not lost, but sent a little before, we shall shortly overtake them. It is but awhile when godly friends shall meet in heaven, and feast together at **the supper of the Lamb,** Revelation 19. 9. It is but a while when the Saints shall lie together in Christ's bosom, that hive of sweetness, that bed of perfume. **Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord,** Revelation 14. 13. Why should we mourn excessively for them who are blessed? Oh let us not weep at the felicity of our friends, but rather long **to depart and be with Christ,** when we shall **drink of those Rivers of pleasure which run at his right hand for evermore.**

FINIS.

THANKS FOR READING



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