

Absent from the Body, by Jonathan Edwards
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SERMON VI.[1]

TRUE SAINTS, WHEN ABSENT FROM THE BODY, ARE PRESENT WITH THE LORD.

Jonathan Edwards

2 CORINTHIANS v. 3.--We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

THE apostle in this place is giving a reason why he went on with so much boldness and immovable steadfastness, through such labors, sufferings, and dangers of his life, in the service of his Lord; for which his enemies, the false teachers among the Corinthians, sometimes reproached him as being beside himself, and driven on by a kind of madness. In the latter part of the preceding chapter, the apostle informs the Christian Corinthians, that the reason why he did thus, was, that he firmly believed the promises that Christ had made to his faithful servants of a glorious future eternal reward, and knew that these present afflictions were light, and but for a moment, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The same discourse is continued in this chapter; wherein the apostle further insists on the reason he had given of his constancy in suffering, and exposing himself to death in the work of the ministry, even the more happy state he expected after death. And this is the subject of the text; wherein may be observed,

1. The great future privilege, which the apostle hoped for; that of being present with Christ. The words, in the original, properly signify dwelling with Christ, as in the same country or city, or making a home with Christ.

2. When the apostle looked for this privilege, viz., when he should be absent from the body. Not to wait for it till the resurrection, when soul and body should be united again. He signifies the same thing in his epistle to the Philippians, chap. i. 22, 23: "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor. Yet what I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait between two; having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ."

3. The value the apostle set on this privilege. It was such, that for the sake of it, he chose to be absent from the body. He was willing rather, or (as the word properly signifies) it were more pleasing to him, to part with the present life, and all its enjoyments, and be possessed of this great benefit, than to continue here.

4. The present benefit, which the apostle had by his faith and hope of this future privilege, and of his great value for it, viz., that hence he received courage, assurance, and constancy of mind, agreeable to the proper import of the word that is rendered, we are confident. The apostle is now giving a reason of that fortitude and immovable stability of mind, with which he went through those extreme labors, hardships and dangers, which he mentions in this discourse; so that, in the midst of all, he did not faint, was not discouraged, but had constant light, and inward

support, strength, and comfort in the midst of all: agreeable to the 10th verse of the foregoing chapter, "For which cause, we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." And the same is expressed more particularly in the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses, of that chapter: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." And in the next chapter, verses 4-10: "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Among the many useful observations there might be raised from the text, I shall at this time only insist on that which lies most plainly before us in the words, viz., this:

The souls of true saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ.

Departed souls of saints go to be with Christ, in the following respects:

I. They go to dwell in the same blessed abode with the glorified human nature of Christ.

The human nature of Christ is yet in being. He still continues, and will continue to all eternity, to be both God and man. His whole human nature remains: not only his human soul, but also his human body. His dead body rose from the dead; and the same that was raised from the dead, is exalted and glorified at God's right hand; that which was dead is now alive, and lives for evermore.

And therefore there is a certain place, a particular part of the external creation, to which Christ is gone, and where he remains. And this place is that which we call the highest heaven, or the heaven of heavens; a place beyond all the visible heavens. Eph. iv. 9, 10, "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens." This is the same which the apostle calls the third heaven, 2 Cor. xii. 2, reckoning the aerial heaven as the first, the starry heaven as the second, and the highest heaven as the third. This is the abode of the holy angels; they are called "the angels of heaven," Matt. xxiv. 36; "The angels which are in heaven," Mark xiii. 32; "The angels of God in heaven," Matt. xxii. 30, and Mark xii. 25. They are said "always to behold the face of the Father which is in heaven," Matt. xviii, 10. And they are elsewhere often represented as before the throne of God, or surrounding his throne in heaven, and sent from thence, and descending from thence on messages to this world. And thither it is that the souls of departed saints are conducted, when they die. They are not reserved in some abode distinct from the highest

heaven; a place of rest, which they are kept in, till the day of judgment; such as some imagine, which they call the hades of the happy: but they go directly to heaven itself. This is the saints' home, being their Father's house: they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and this is the other and better country that they are travelling to, Heb. xi. 13Q26. This is the city they belong to: Philip. iii. 20, "Our conversation or (as the word properly signifies) citizenship, is in heaven." Therefore this undoubtedly is the place the apostle has respect to in my text, when he says, "We are willing to forsake our former house, the body, and to dwell in the same house, city or country, wherein Christ dwells;" which is the proper import of the words of the original. What can this house, or city, or country be, but that house, which is elsewhere spoken of, as their proper home, and their Father's house, and the city and country to which they properly belong, and whither they are travelling all the while they continue in this world, and the house, city, and country where we know the human nature of Christ is? This is the saints' rest; here their hearts are while they live; and here their treasure is. "The inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, that is designed for them, is reserved in heaven," 1 Pet. i. 4; and therefore they never can have their proper and full rest till they come here. So that undoubtedly their souls, when absent from their bodies (when the Scriptures represent them as in a state of perfect rest), arrive hither. Those two saints, that left this world, to go to their rest in another world, without dying, viz., Enoch and Elijah, went to heaven. Elijah was seen ascending up to heaven, as Christ was. And to the same resting place, is there all reason to think, that those saints go, that leave the world, to go to their rest, by death. Moses, when he died in the top of the mount, ascended to the same glorious abode with Elias, who ascended without dying. They are companions in another world; as they appeared together at Christ's transfiguration. They were together at that time with Christ in the mount, when there was a specimen or sample of his glorification in heaven. And doubtless they were also together afterwards, with him, when he was, actually, fully glorified in heaven. And thither undoubtedly it was, that the soul of Stephen ascended, when he expired. The circumstances of his death demonstrate it, as we have an account of it, Acts vii. 55, &c.: "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man (i.e. Jesus, in his human nature) standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Before his death he had an extraordinary view of the glory that his Saviour had received in heaven, not only for himself, but for him, and all his faithful followers; that he might be encouraged, by the hopes of this glory, cheerfully to lay down his life for his sake. Accordingly he dies in the hope of this, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." By which doubtless he meant, "receive my spirit to be with thee, in that glory, wherein I have now seen thee, in heaven, at the right hand of God." And thither it was that the soul of the penitent thief on the cross ascended. Christ said to him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paradise is the same with the third heaven; as appears by 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4. There that which is called the third heaven in the 2d verse, in the 4th verse is called paradise.

The departed souls of the apostles and prophets are in heaven; as is manifest from Rev. xviii. 20: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets."

The church of God is distinguished in Scripture, from time to time, into these two parts; that part of it that is in heaven, and that which is in earth; Eph. iii. 14, 15, "Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Col. i. 20, "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Now what things in heaven are they for whom peace has been made by the blood of Christ's cross, and who have by him been reconciled to God, but the saints in heaven? In like manner we read, Eph. i. 10, of God's gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." The spirits of just men made perfect are in the same city of the living God, and heavenly Jerusalem, with the innumerable company of angels, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; as is manifest by Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. The church of God is often in Scripture called by the name Jerusalem; and the apostle speaks of the Jerusalem which is above, or which is in heaven, as the mother of us all; but if no part of the church be in heaven, or none but Enoch and Elias, it is not likely that the church would be called the Jerusalem which is in heaven.

II. The souls of true saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ, as they go to dwell in the immediate, full and constant sight or view of him.

When we are absent from our dear friends, they are out of sight; but when we are with them, we have the opportunity and satisfaction of seeing them. So while the saints are in the body, and are absent from the Lord, HE is in several respects out of sight: 1 Pet. i. 8, "Whom having not seen, ye love: in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing," &c. They have indeed, in this world, a spiritual sight of Christ; but they see through a glass darkly, and with great interruption; but in heaven they see him face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12; "The pure in heart are blessed; for they shall see God," Matt. v. 8. Their beatifical vision of God is in Christ, who is that brightness or effulgence of God's glory, by which his glory shines forth in heaven, to the view of saints and angels there, as well as here on earth. This is the Sun of righteousness, that is not only the light of this world, but is also the sun that enlightens the heavenly Jerusalem; by whose bright beams it is that the glory of God shines forth there, to the enlightening and making happy all the glorious inhabitants. "The Lamb is the light thereof; and so the glory of God doth lighten it," Rev. xxi. 23. None sees God the Father immediately, who is the King eternal, immortal, invisible; Christ is the image of that invisible God, by which he is seen by all elect creatures. The only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him, and manifested him. None has ever immediately seen the Father, but the Son; and none else sees the Father any other way, than by the Son's revealing him. And in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect do see him as he is. They behold his glory. They see the glory of his divine nature, consisting in all the glory of the Godhead, the beauty of all his perfections; his great majesty, almighty power, his infinite wisdom, holiness, and grace, and they see the beauty of his glorified human nature, and the glory which the Father hath given him, as God-man and Mediator. For this end, Christ desired that his saints might "be with him, that they might behold his glory," John xvii. 24. And

when the souls of the saints leave their bodies, to go to be with Christ, they behold the marvellous glory of that great work of his, the work of redemption, and of the glorious way of salvation by him; desire to look into. They have a most clear view of the unfathomable depths of the manifold wisdom and knowledge of God; and the most bright displays of the infinite purity and holiness of God, that do appear in that way and work; and see in a much clearer manner than the saints do here, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height of the grace and love of Christ, appearing in his redemption. And as they see the unspeakable riches and glory of the attribute of God's grace, so they most clearly behold and understand Christ's eternal and unmeasurable dying love to them in particular. And in short, they see every thing in Christ that tends to kindle and inflame love, and every thing that tends to gratify love, and every thing that tends to satisfy them: and that in the most clear and glorious manner, without any darkness or delusion, without any impediment or interruption. Now the saints, while in the body, see something of Christ's glory and love; as we, in the dawning of the morning, see something of the reflected light of the sun mingled with darkness; but when separated from the body, they see their glorious and loving Redeemer, as we see the sun when risen, and showing his whole disk above the horizon, by his direct beams, in a clear hemisphere, and with perfect day.

III. The souls of true saints, when absent from the body go to be with Jesus Christ, as they are brought into a most perfect conformity to and union with him. Their spiritual conformity is begun while they are in the body; here beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image; but when they come to see him as he is, in heaven, then they become like him in another manner. That perfect sight will abolish all remains of deformity, disagreement, and sinful unlikeness; as all darkness is abolished before the full blaze of the sun's meridian light: it is impossible that the least degree of obscurity should remain before such light; so it is impossible the least degree of sin and spiritual deformity should remain, in such a view of the spiritual beauty and glory of Christ, as the saints enjoy in heaven; when they see that Sun of righteousness without a cloud, they themselves shine forth as the sun, and shall be as little suns, without a spot. For then is come the time when Christ presents his saints to himself, in glorious beauty; "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" and having holiness without a blemish. And then the saints' union with Christ is perfected. This also is begun in this world. The relative union is both begun and perfected at once, when the soul first closes with Christ by faith: the real union, consisting in the union of hearts and affections, and in the vital union, is begun in this world and perfected in the next. The union of the heart of a believer to Christ, is begun when his heart is drawn to Christ, by the first discovery of divine excellency, at conversion; and consequent on this drawing and closing of his heart with Christ, is established a vital union with Christ; whereby the believer becomes a living branch of the true vine, living by a communication of the sap and vital juice of the stock and root; and a member of Christ's mystical body, living by a communication of spiritual and vital influences from the head, and by a kind of participation of Christ's own life. But while the saints are in the body, there is much remaining distance between Christ and them: there are remainders of alienation, and the vital union is very imperfect; and so consequently is the communication of spiritual life and

vital influences: there is much between Christ and believers to keep them asunder, much indwelling sin, much temptation, a world of carnal objects, to keep off the soul from Christ, and hinder a perfect coalescence.

But when the soul leaves the body, all these clogs and hinderances shall be removed, every separating wall shall be broken down, and every impediment taken out of the way, and all distance shall cease; the heart shall be wholly and forever attached and bound to him, by a perfect view of his glory. And the vital union shall then be brought to perfection; the soul shall live perfectly in and upon Christ, being perfectly filled with his spirit, and animated by his vital influences; living, as it were, only by Christ's life, without any remainder of spiritual death, or carnal life.

IV. Departed souls of saints are with Christ, as they enjoy a glorious and immediate intercourse and converse with him.

While we are present with our friends, we have opportunity for that free and immediate conversation with them, which we cannot have in absence from them. And therefore, by reason of the vastly more free, perfect, and immediate intercourse with Christ, which the saints enjoy when absent from the body, they are fitly represented as present with him.

The most intimate intercourse becomes that relation that the saints stand in to Jesus Christ; and especially becomes that most perfect and glorious union they shall be brought into with him in heaven. They are not merely Christ's servants, but his friends, John xv. 15. His brethren and companions, Psalm cxxii. 8; "yea, they are the spouse of Christ." They are espoused or betrothed to Christ while in the body; but when they go to heaven, they enter into the king's palace, their marriage with him is come, and the king brings them into his chambers indeed. They then go to dwell with Christ constantly, to enjoy the most perfect converse with him. Christ conversed in the most friendly manner with his disciples on earth; he admitted one of them to lean on his bosom: but they are admitted much more fully and freely to converse with him in heaven. Though Christ be there in a state of glorious exaltation, reigning in the majesty and glory of the sovereign Lord and God of heaven and earth, angels and men; yet this will not hinder intimacy and freedom of intercourse, but rather promote it. For he is thus exalted, not only for himself, but for them; he is instated in this glory of head over all things for their sakes, that they might be exalted and glorified; and when they go to heaven where he is, they are exalted and glorified with him; and shall not be kept at a more awful distance from Christ, but shall be admitted nearer, and to a greater intimacy. For they shall be unspeakably more fit for it, and Christ in more fit circumstances to bestow on them this blessedness. Their seeing the great glory of their friend and Redeemer, will not awe them to a distance, and make them afraid of a near approach; but on the contrary, will most powerfully draw them near, and encourage and engage them to holy freedom. For they will know that it is he that is their own Redeemer, and beloved friend and bridegroom; the very same that loved them with a dying love, and redeemed them to God by his blood; Matt. xiv. 27, "It is I; be not afraid." Rev. i. 17, 18, "Fear not:--I am he that liveth, and was dead." And the nature of this glory of Christ that they shall see, will be such as will draw and encourage them; for they will not only see infinite majesty and greatness, but infinite grace, condescension, and mildness, and gentleness and sweetness, equal to his majesty. For he appears in heaven, not only as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah,

but as the Lamb, and the Lamb in the midst of the throne, "Rev. v. 5, 6; and this Lamb in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, to" feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water," Rev. vii. 17; so that the sight of Christ's great kingly majesty will be no terror to them; but will only serve the more to heighten their pleasure and surprise. When Mary was about to embrace Christ, being full of joy at the sight of him again alive after his crucifixion, Christ forbids her to do it for the ended: John xx. 16, 17, "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God." As if he had said, "This is not the time and place for that freedom your love to me desires: this is appointed in heaven after my ascension. I am going thither; and you that are my true disciples, shall, as my brethren and companions, soon be there with me in my glory. And then there shall be no restraint. That is the place appointed for the most perfect expressions of complacence and endearment, and full enjoyment of mutual love." And accordingly the souls of departed saints with Christ in heaven, shall have Christ as it were unbosomed unto them, manifesting those infinite riches of love towards them, that have been there from eternity; and they shall be enabled to express their love to him, in an infinitely better manner than ever they could while in the body. Thus they shall eat and drink abundantly, and swim in the ocean of love, and be eternally swallowed up in the infinitely bright, and infinitely mild and sweet beams of divine love; eternally receiving that light, eternally full of it, and eternally compassed round with it, and everlastingly reflecting it back again to the fountain of it.

V. The souls of the saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ, as they are received to a glorious fellowship with Christ in his blessedness.

As the wife is received to a joint possession of her husband's estate, and as the wife of a prince partakes with him in his princely possessions and honors; so the church, the spouse of Christ, when the marriage comes, and she is received to dwell with him in heaven, shall partake with him in his glory. When Christ rose from the dead, and took possession of eternal life; this was not as a private person, but as the public head of all his redeemed people. He took possession of it for them, as well as for himself; and "they are quickened together with him, and raised up together." And so when he ascended into heaven, and was exalted to great glory there, this also was as a public person. He took possession of heaven, not only for himself, but his people, as their forerunner and head, that they might ascend also, "and sit together in heavenly places with him," Eph. ii. 5, 6. "Christ writes upon them his new name," Rev. iii. 12; i.e., he makes them partakers of his own glory and exaltation in heaven. His new name is that new honor and glory that the Father invested him with, when he set him on his own right hand. As a prince, when he advances any one to new dignity in his kingdom, gives him a new title. Christ and his saints shall be glorified together, Rom. viii. 17.

The saints in heaven have communion, or a joint participation with Christ in his glory and blessedness in heaven, in the following respects more especially.

1. They partake with him in the ineffable delights he has in heaven, in the enjoyment of his Father.

When Christ ascended into heaven, he was received to a glorious and peculiar joy and blessedness in the enjoyment of his Father, who, in his passion, hid his face from him; such an enjoyment as became the relation he stood in to the Father, and such as was a meet reward for the great and hard service he had performed on earth. Then "God showed him the path of life, and brought him into his presence, where is fulness of joy, and to sit on his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore," as is said of Christ, Psalm xvi. 11. Then the Father "made him most blessed forever. He made him exceeding glad with his countenance;" as in Psalm xxi. 6. The saints, by virtue of their union with Christ, and being his members, do, in some sort partake of his childlike relation to the Father; and so are heirs with him of his happiness in the enjoyment of his Father; as seems to be intimated by the apostle, in Gal. iv. 4--7. The spouse of Christ, by virtue of her espousals to that only begotten Son of God, is, as it were, a partaker of his filial relation to God, and becomes the king's daughter, Psalm xiv. 13, and so partakes with her divine husband in his enjoyment of his Father and her Father, his God and her God." A promise of this seems to be implied in those words of Christ to Mary, John xx. 17. Thus Christ's faithful servants "enter into the joy of their Lord," Matt. xxv. 21, 23, and "Christ's joy remains in them;" agreeably to those words of Christ, John xv. 11. Christ from eternity is, as it were, in the bosom of the Father, as the object of his infinite complacence. In him is the Father's eternal happiness. Before the world was, he was with the Father, in the enjoyment of his infinite love; and had infinite delight and blessedness in that enjoyment; as he declares of himself in Prov. viii. 30: "Then I was by him as one brought up with him. And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." And when Christ ascended to the Father after his passion, he went to him, to the enjoyment of the same glory and blessedness in the enjoyment of his love; agreeably to his prayer the evening before his crucifixion, John xvii. 5: "And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was." And in the same prayer, he manifests it to be his will, that his true disciples should be with him in the enjoyment of that joy and glory, which he then asked for himself, verse 13: "That my joy might be fulfilled in themselves:" verse 22, "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." This glory of Christ, which the saints are to enjoy with him, is that which he has in the enjoyment of the Father's infinite love to him; as appears by the last words of that prayer of our Lord, verse 26: "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." The love which the Father has to his Son is great indeed: the Deity does, as it were, wholly and entirely flow out in a stream of love to Christ; and the joy and pleasure of Christ is proportionably great. This is the stream of Christ's delights, the river of his infinite pleasure; which he will make his saints to drink of with him, agreeably to Psal. xxxvi. 8, 9: "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house. Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life. In thy light shall we see light." The saints shall have pleasure in partaking with Christ in his pleasure, and shall see light in his light. They shall partake with Christ of the same river of pleasure, shall drink of the same water of life, and of the same new wine in Christ's Father's kingdom, Matt. xxvi. 29. That new wine is especially that joy and happiness that Christ and his true disciples shall partake of together in glory, which is the purchase of Christ's blood, or the

reward of his obedience unto death. Christ, at his ascension into heaven, received everlasting pleasures at his Father's right hand, and in the enjoyment of his Father's love, as the reward of his own death, or obedience unto death. But the same righteousness is reckoned to both head and members; and both shall have fellowship in the same reward, each according to their distinct capacity.

That the saints in heaven have such a communion with Christ in his joy, and do so partake with him in his own enjoyment of the Father, does greatly manifest the transcendent excellency of their happiness, and their being admitted to a vastly higher privilege in glory than the angels.

2. The saints in heaven are received to a fellowship or participation with Christ in the glory of that dominion to which the Father hath exalted him.

The saints, when they ascend to heaven as Christ ascended, and are made to sit together with him in heavenly places, and are partakers of the glory of his exaltation, are exalted to reign with him. They are through him made kings and priests, and reign with him, and in him, over the same kingdom. As the Father hath appointed unto him a kingdom, so he has appointed to them. The Father has appointed the Son to reign over his own kingdom, and the Son appoints his saints to reign in his. The Father has given to Christ to sit with him on his throne, and Christ gives to the saints to sit with him on his throne, agreeably to Christ's promise, Rev. iii. 21. Christ, as God's Son, is the heir of his kingdom, and the saints are joint heirs with Christ: which implies, that they are heirs of the same inheritance, to possess the same kingdom, in and with him, according to their capacity. Christ, in his kingdom, reigns over heaven and earth; he is appointed the heir of all things; and so all things are the saints'; "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come," all are theirs; because they are Christ's, and united to him, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. The angels are given to Christ as a part of his dominion: they are all given to wait upon him as ministering spirits to him. So also they are all, even the highest and most dignified of them, ministering spirits, to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation. They are Christ's angels, and they are also their angels. Such is the saints' union with Christ, and their interest in him, that what he possesses, they possess, in a much more perfect and blessed manner than if all things were given to them separately, and by themselves, to be disposed of according to their discretion. They are now disposed of so as, in every respect, to be most for their blessedness, by an infinitely better discretion than their own; and in being disposed of by their head and husband, between whom and them there is the most perfect union of hearts, and so the most perfect union of wills, and who are most perfectly each other's.

As the glorified spouse of this great King reigns with and in him, in his dominion over the universe, so more especially does she partake with him in the joy and glory of his reign in his kingdom of grace; which is more peculiarly the kingdom that he possesses as Head of the church, and is that kingdom wherein she is more especially interested. It was especially to reign in this kingdom, that God the Father exalted him to his throne in heaven: he set his King on his holy hill of Zion, especially that he might reign over Zion, or over his church, in his kingdom of grace; and that he might be under the best advantages to carry on the designs of his love in this lower world. And therefore undoubtedly the

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