

“Now We See Dimly, But then Face to Face”  
(1 Corinthians 13:12)

I. Introduction.

A. Review.

1. Last week, we looked at the blessings that we receive from Christ at death:
  - a. Sin is finally and completely taken away: no more temptation, no more guilt, no more struggling with our sins or others.
  - b. We get to go to be with our Lord and enjoy heaven: perfect joy, happiness, love.
  - c. And we will receive our bodies again at the resurrection.
  - d. We'll see more about this evening.
2. If this is true – and it is – we shouldn't be afraid to die.
  - a. If we have trusted in Christ, these blessings will be ours.
  - b. Nothing in heaven or earth can take them away from us.
  - c. Christ has guaranteed them for us in heaven by His life and death.

B. Preview: This evening, we'll want to look at the three blessings we receive at the resurrection:

1. We will be raised up and transformed into the likeness of Jesus.
2. The Lord will declare us to be not guilty on the Day of Judgment and receive us into heaven.
3. And we will be made perfectly happy and enjoy God fully for the rest of eternity.

II. Sermon.

A. First, we will be raised up and transformed into the likeness of Jesus:

1. Paul writes regarding our resurrection body, “It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power” (1 Cor. 15:43).
  - a. There really isn't anything honorable about our burial.
    - (i) A person can be buried with honor.
    - (ii) But the idea of our bodies decomposing, seeing corruption, turning slowly back into dust isn't honorable in itself.
    - (iii) It is the final effect of sin on our bodies, robbing them of life, returning them to the earth (Gen. 3:19).
    - (iv) But though it will be sown in dishonor, it will be raised in glory.
    - (v) The effects of sin will be reversed.
    - (vi) More than that, it will be changed into the image of Christ's glorified body.
    - (vii) Paul writes, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself” (Phil 3:20-21).
  - b. Our burial will be the greatest proof of our weakness.
    - (i) We are absolutely helpless to do anything about our death.
    - (ii) There's no way for us to forestall it for very long.

- (iii) But it will be raised in power, the power of Christ, resurrection power, power that will never let it die again.
  - (iv) It will be raised by the Spirit of Christ.
- 2. John tells us that we have already been adopted in Christ.
  - a. He writes, “Beloved, now we are children of God.”
  - b. But he also tells us, “it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2).
  - c. When He comes to give us our full adoption as sons and daughters, He will redeem our bodies and glorify them.
  - d. Richard Baxter, that great English pastor of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, once wrote, “If a skilful workman can turn a little earth and ashes into such curious transparent glasses as we daily see, and if a little seed that beats no show of such a thing can produce the more beautiful flowers of the earth, and if a little acorn can bring forth the greatest oak; why should we once doubt whether the seed of everlasting life and glory, which is now in the blessed souls with Christ, can by Him communicate a perfection to the flesh that is dissolved into its elements?” (*Golden Treasury*).
- B. The second blessing is that the Lord will declare us to be not guilty on the Day of Judgment and receive us into heaven.
  - 1. We need to remember that there is a day appointed in which God will judge all men through Christ Jesus (Acts 17:31).
    - a. Paul writes, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).
    - b. That judgment will include everyone and their eternal destination will be pronounced on that day.
  - 2. But what will happen to us, if we have trusted in Christ?
    - a. The Lord Jesus will say to us on that day, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34).
    - b. He will say to us, “Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:23).
  - 3. How can He say these things?
    - a. Because they are true.
    - b. By His grace He will cause us to persevere, to be faithful; and we will receive the blessing.
    - c. Thomas Watson once wrote, “God’s decree is the very pillar and basis on which the saints’ perseverance depends. That decree ties the knot of adoption so fast, that neither sin, death, nor hell, can break it asunder.”
    - d. And he wrote, “When God calls a man, He does not repent of it. God does not, as many friends do, love one day, and hate another; or as princes, who make their subjects favorites, and afterwards throw them into prison. This is the blessedness of a saint; his condition admits of no alteration. God’s call is founded upon His decree,

and His decree is immutable. Acts of grace cannot be reversed. God blots out His people's sins, but not their names" (*Golden Treasury*).

C. Lastly, we will be made perfectly happy and enjoy God fully for the rest of eternity. Paul writes, "When the perfect comes, the partial will be done away" (1 Cor. 13:10).

1. The perfect Paul speaks of will finally have come.

a. There are really three states of perfection the Bible speaks of:

(i) There is the perfect or mature or full grown state of the church.

(ii) There is the perfect state of the soul.

(iii) And there is the perfect state of the soul and body at the resurrection.

b. After the NT church was established, the foundation laid, the Word given, the church became perfect, or mature.

(i) At that point, God stopped giving the charismatic gifts.

(ii) His revelation was complete.

c. But there is another perfection: that of the soul.

(i) As we saw last week, when the body dies, the soul is made perfect.

(ii) That work is only in part here, as everything else is.

(iii) But there, we are made perfect.

d. But there is also the perfect state of the church at the resurrection.

(i) When our bodies are raised and made like Christ's, then that part of us will also be made perfect.

(ii) And when our perfect soul and body are united, then we will be able to enjoy heaven perfectly.

(iii) But in this state, we will also be able to enjoy God perfectly.

(iv) Paul writes, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

(v) He doesn't mean we will have infinite knowledge – that we will know God perfectly in that sense – but that we will be able to love God, even as He has loved us, without being hindered by sin.

2. The one gift of the Spirit that will never end throughout all these times is love.

a. It is also made perfect at death.

b. But it will be revealed in all its fullness at the resurrection, when God shows us His love through perfecting His redemption and making us like His Son.

c. We will know God, not comprehend Him, but have perfect intimacy with Him.

3. And this will go on forever. Paul writes, "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thes. 4:17-18).

### III. Application.

A. Let's not be too worried about our bodies down here.

1. We do need to take care of them, but they will grow old and turn back into dust.

2. But God will raise them and they will be made like Christ's.
  3. Ultimately, we will share in a beauty that is greater than anything we can even imagine down here.
- B. Let's learn not to be afraid of God's judgment, but to trust Him.
1. The only thing we need to be concerned about is living the kind of life He has called us to live.
  2. We need to confess Him openly and freely before others, for if we do, He will own us.
  3. Jesus says, "Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32).
- C. Finally, let's learn not to look for our happiness down here, but above.
1. We only see these blessings dimly down here, but there we shall see them clearly.
  2. Jonathan Edwards once wrote, "When persons entirely set their love upon another, they naturally desire to *see* that person. Merely to hear of the person, does not satisfy love. So here is provision made that we should see God, the object of our supreme love. Not only that we should hear and read of him in his word, but that we should see him with a spiritual eye here. And not only so, but that we should have the satisfaction of seeing God face to face hereafter. This is promised Mat. 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." It is promised that we shall not see God, as through a glass darkly, as we do now, but face to face, 1 Cor. 13:12. That we shall see Christ as He is, 1 John 3:2. (*The Wisdom of God Displayed in Salvation*).
  3. He also wrote, "'Tis from the little that the saints have seen of God, and know of him in this world that they are excited to praise him in the degree they do here. But here they see but as in a glass darkly; they have only now and then a little glimpse of God's excellency. But then they shall have the transcendent glory and divine excellency of God set in their immediate and full view. They shall dwell in his immediate glorious presence and shall see face to face, 1 Cor. 13:12. Now the saints see the glory of God but by a reflected light, as we in the night see the light of the sun reflected from the moon. But in heaven they shall directly behold the Sun of righteousness, and shall look full upon him when shining in all his glory. This being the case, it can be no otherwise, but that they should very much employ themselves in praising God. When they behold the glorious power of God, they cannot but praise that power. When they see God's wisdom that is so wonderful, and infinitely beyond all created wisdom, they cannot but continually praise that wisdom. When they view the infinitely pure and lovely holiness of God, whereby the heavens themselves are not pure in comparison with him, how can they avoid with an exalted heart to praise that beauty of the divine nature! When they see the infinite grace of God, and see what a boundless ocean of mercy and love he is, how can they but celebrate that grace with the highest praise! (*Praise a Chief Employment of Heaven*).
  4. We only know Him in part down here. But there we shall know Him fully. That will make us perfectly happy to all eternity.
  5. Let's set our hearts on that and not on the things of this world. Amen.