

“The Perfection of Heaven”
(1 Corinthians 13:8-12)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. We’ve seen from David and Paul’s experiences how the effects of saving grace are primarily on the affections.
2. We saw the same in Jesus, who is the only perfect example of true religion.
3. This proves what Edwards has told us that true religion, the religion that saves, is primarily a matter of the affections.

B. Preview.

1. This evening, let’s consider one further example to show us this is true: when that grace in us has reached its perfection in heaven, holy affection will still be central – which follows from the fact that we’ll be transformed into the likeness of Christ.
2. Tonight, we’ll consider three things:
 - a. First, for a little variety, we’ll look at what heaven is.
 - b. Second, why we should consider heaven to see what true saving grace is like.
 - c. Finally, how the affections we have now will be even stronger in heaven.

II. Sermon.

A. First, let’s review what heaven is.

1. Heaven is, first of all, the place where God dwells.
 - a. It is a created place: it’s not eternal, only God is.
 - b. It’s where the angels and the departed saints dwell (Heb. 12).
 - c. It’s also the place Jesus went when He ascended (Acts 1:9; cf. Dan. 7:13-14).
 - d. Jesus calls it His Father’s house, the place He has gone to prepare for us, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also” (John 14:1-3).
2. Heaven is known by many names in Scripture.
 - a. It’s called paradise, primarily because everything we desire is there (Ps. 73:25):
 - (i) “And he was saying, ‘Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!’ And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise’” (Luke 23:42-43).
 - (ii) “And I know how such a man – whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows – was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak” (2 Cor. 12:3-4).

- b. It is called the heavenly Jerusalem, or the city of peace, because its King is the Prince of peace:
- (i) “Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother” (Gal. 4:25-26).
 - (ii) “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel” (Heb. 12: 22-24).
- c. The kingdom of heaven:
- (i) The place where we’ll enjoy those blessings promised to the patriarchs: “I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 8:11).
 - (ii) The kingdom promised to His people: “Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” (James 2:5).
- d. The eternal kingdom: “Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you” (2 Pet. 2:10-11).
- e. The eternal inheritance Christ has purchased for us:
- (i) “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:3-4).
 - (ii) “For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15).
- f. It is called a better country – better than any earthly shadows: “For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them” (Heb. 11:14-16).

g. Abraham's bosom – the place of comfort, compassion and mercy: “Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried” (Luke 16:22).

3. Here we will reign with Christ:

- a. “If we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12).
- b. Enjoy eternal rest: “For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:10-11).
- c. Eternal glory: “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:17).
- d. Freedom from suffering: “For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven” (2 Cor. 5:1-2).
- e. Deliverance from all evil: “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen” (2 Tim. 4:18).
- f. There will be bliss without end, fullness of joy:
 - (i) “But those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:35-36).
 - (ii) “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you” (1 Pet. 5:10).
- g. Is it any wonder Paul desired to depart and to be where Christ was (Phil. 1:23)?
 - (i) Certainly, he wanted to be there for Christ's sake.
 - (ii) But these other blessings also provide an incentive.

B. Second, let's consider why we should look at heaven to see what true saving grace is like.

1. The reason is simply because this is where grace is found in its purest form.
 - a. If we want to know what gold is like, we must study it after it's refined and not in its ore.
 - b. If we want to see what true religion is like, we must look toward heaven where it reaches its climax.
2. In heaven, all sin will have been removed, anything that hinders the grace of God – the work of the Spirit – in its full power.
 - a. There our love will be perfected.
 - b. There we will have fullness of joy.

- c. There we will express those things to the Lord in the most fervent praise.
 - d. There, we will experience grace in all its glory.
- C. Finally, let's consider that the religion in heaven is the same as that on earth – love, joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Pet. 1:8) – but it will be much stronger, even in the intermediate state.
1. Though we will not have our bodies in heaven during the intermediate state, we will still experience affections in heaven.
 - a. Remember, the affections are not a part of the body, but a part of the soul.
 - b. When they are in the soul, whether that soul is in the body or outside of it, the soul is affected, it is moved.
 - c. *In heaven, our souls will be moved much more powerfully than here, because there will be no weakness of the flesh to get in the way, none of the quenching influences of sin.*
 - d. We don't know what this is like; we've never had out of body experiences. But we do know what it's like in the body. It's the same kind, of the same nature, but is different in its strength and in the circumstances in which we experience them.
 - e. It's true that affections have affects on our bodies, such as tingling, or increased breathing, or a feeling of greater strength, or even greater weakness, or increased pulse rate.
 - f. But these affections begin in our souls before they affect our bodies. “There is a sensation of the mind which loves and rejoices, that is antecedent to any effects on the fluids of the body; and this sensation of the mind, therefore, does not depend on these motions in the body, and so may be in the soul without the body. And wherever there are the exercises of love and joy, there is that sensation of the mind, whether it be in the body or out; and that inward sensation, or kind of spiritual sense, or feeling, and motion of the soul, is what is called affection: the soul when it thus feels (if I may say so), and is thus moved, is said to be affected, and especially when this inward sensation and motion are to a very high degree, as they are in the saints in heaven. If we can learn anything of the state of heaven from the Scripture, the love and joy that the saints have there, is exceeding great and vigorous; impressing the heart with the strongest and most lively sensation of inexpressible sweetness, mightily moving, animating and engaging them, making them like a flame of fire. And if such love and joy be not affections, then the word *affection* is of no use in language. — Will any say, that the saints in heaven, in beholding the face of their Father, and the glory of their Redeemer, and contemplating his wonderful works, and particularly his laying down his life for them, have their hearts nothing moved and affected by all which they behold or consider?”
 2. In heaven, we'll experience the fullness of what began on earth.
 - a. Solomon writes, “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day” (Prov. 4:18).

- b. Paul writes, “Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:8-12).
- c. If we are true believers, we belong to heaven; we are only passing through this world to the next. We already have a heavenly deposit in our hearts that makes us want to be with the Lord in glory. This is what begins the transformation in our lives into the image of Christ.
- d. But in heaven we will receive the full indwelling of the Spirit and with that will be transformed into the image of Christ.
- e. Seeing that Christ’s life was a flame of love and devotion to the Lord, and that this is what we’ll be like when we finally arrive in heaven, we know that the religion of heaven, true religion, has mainly to do with love, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.
- f. This is what we need to be experiencing here below if we are to know we are true believers with saving grace in our souls.
- g. Let’s ask the Lord to search our hearts to show us whether this is true of us. Amen.