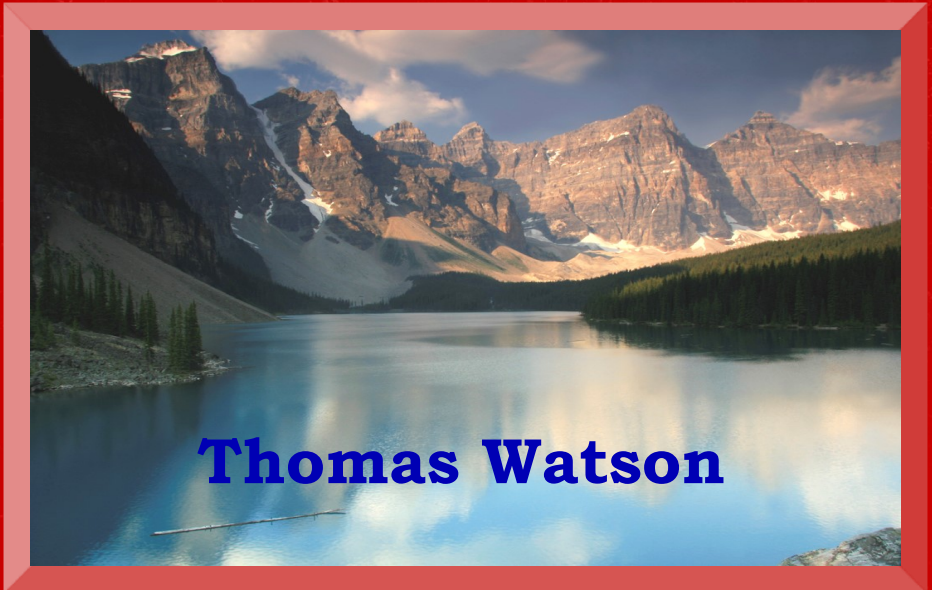


A Christian on the Mount — A Christian on Earth Still In Heaven



A Christian on the Mount — Part Four

Thomas Watson

Appendix to the Former Discourse A Christian on Earth Still In Heaven

“When I awake I am still with thee” Psalm 139:18.

The Scripture is a spiritual paradise: the book of Psalms is placed as the tree of life in the midst of this paradise. The Psalms are not only for delight, but usefulness; they are like the pomegranate tree which is not only for savour, but fruit; or like those trees of the sanctuary, Ezek. 47:12. both for food and medicine. The Psalms are enriched with variety, and suited to every Christian’s estate and condition. They are a spiritual panoply and storehouse; if he find his heart dead, here he may fetch fire; if he be weak in grace, here he may fetch armour; if he be ready to faint, here are cordials lying by. There is no condition you can name but there is a Psalm suited to that condition.

1. In case of sickness. “Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness,” Psa. 41:3. and sure that bed must needs be soft which God will make; and there is a parallel Psalm to this, “My flesh fails,” Psa. 73:26. my health is declining, “but the Lord is the strength of my heart;” or, as the Septuagint renders it, “He is the God of my heart.”

2. In case of reproach. “I was a reproach among my enemies,” Psa. 31:11. “But I trusted in thee O Lord, I said, thou art my God,” verse 14. “Blessed be the Lord, for he hath shown me his marvellous loving-kindness in a strong city,” verse 21. Here was some sunshine breaking forth out of those black clouds.

3. In case of unkind treatment from friends. “For it was not an enemy, then I could have borne it, but it was thou, mine equal, my guide, and my acquaintance; we took sweet counsel together,” Psa. 55:12, 13. here was the malady; “Cast thy burden upon the Lord,” verse 22, there was the cure. The Chaldee reads it, Cast thy hope; the Septuagint, Cast thy care. God is power, therefore he is

able to help; he is mercy, therefore he is willing. “He shall sustain thee,” here is God’s promise, which is his bond to secure us.

4. In case we are close begirt with enemies. There is a Psalm suited to this condition; “Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise up against me,” Psa. 3:1. “I laid me down and slept,” verse 5. David, when beset around with enemies, could lie down and sleep upon the soft pillow of a good conscience; and, Psa. 27:3. “Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. He shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me,” verse 5. He shall hide me so safe as if I were in the holy place of the sanctuary, where none but the priest was to enter.

5. In case of poverty. If a Christian’s state be brought so low, that like the widow, 1 Kings 17:12. he hath nothing but a handful of meal, and a little oil in the cruise left, there is a Psalm of consolation, “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me,” Psa. 40:17. “I will bless her provision, I will satisfy her poor with bread,” Psa. 132:15. Here is the dew of a blessing distilled; “Thou art my portion, O Lord,” Psa. 119:57. Behold riches in poverty; what though the water in the bottle be spent, if this well be at hand?

6. If sin, through the power of temptation, prevail against a child of God, there is a Psalm consolatory: “Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away,” Psa. 65:3. In the Hebrew it is, thou shalt hide them. It alludes to the mercy-seat which was covered with the wings of the cherubims; so are the sins of the godly, when repented of, covered with the wings of mercy and favour.

7. In case of prayer, and no speedy return. “I am weary of my crying, my eyes fail while I wait for my God,” Psa. 69:3. But in the same Psalm he yet obtained comfort; “The Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners,” verse 33. Would we have fruit before it is ripe? when the mercy is ripe, we shall have it; and besides, there is nothing lost by waiting; we send out the golden fleet of prayer to heaven, the longer this fleet stays out, the greater return it will bring with it. David found it so; therefore he pulls

off his sackcloth, and puts on the garments of praise; “I will praise the name of God with a song,” verse 30.

8. In case of desertion. This is the poisoned arrow that wounds to the heart, but still there is a Psalm to turn to; “The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance,” Psa. 94:14. This is like a star in a dark night, or like the plank and broken pieces of the ship on which Paul and the rest came safe to shore, Acts 27:44. God may conceal his love from his children, not take it away, 2 Sam. 7:15. He may change his providence towards them, not alter his purpose.

9. In case of death, there is a Psalm which revives; “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,” Psa. 23:4. The sting and poison of this serpent is taken away. Thou art with me; with thy power to support, with thy grace to sanctify, with thy love to sweeten. “Thy rod and thy staff comfort me.” I have the staff of thy promise in the hand of my faith, and with this I can walk through the dark entry of death. Thus, in every condition David’s Psalms, like David’s harp, may serve to drive away the evil spirit of sadness and uncheerfulness from a Christian. So much concerning the Psalms in general.

I come now to the words of the text, “When I awake, I am still with thee.”

Here you have the very effigies and portraiture of a godly man drawn out: he is one that is still with God. It was David’s happiness that he lived above the common rate of men, not only as he was higher in power and dignity, being a king, but higher in sublimeness of affection, having his heart and hope raised above the world, “I am still with thee.” Divines give many reasons why David was called a man after God’s heart, but surely this is not the least, because the frame of his heart was so heavenly, this being most agreeable to God’s nature and will. David was a man who, as Ambrose speaks, lived in the world above the world. As soon as he awoke, he stepped into heaven. David was a seraphical saint, a mortal angel; like a true bird of paradise, he did seldom touch with his feet upon the earth. He was least alone when he was most alone. When he awoke he was with God.

Nor was this only when the fit was upon him, a thought of God and away, but it was a fixed temper of heart. I am still with thee. The pulse of his soul was still beating after God. The hypocrite may have a blush of godliness which is quickly over, Job 27:10. but the constitution of David's soul was heavenly, "I am still with thee."

Caution. Not but that David had some diversions of mind. To have the eye always fixed upon God, will be the state of the blessed in heaven; but, David was still with God. 1. Because the bias and bent of his spirit was towards God. His heart, like the needle in the compass, pointed heavenward. 2. Because he was more with God than he was any where else; as we use to say a man lives at his house, not but that urgency of occasions draws him abroad sometimes, but he is said to live there, because he is most resident there.

The words hold forth this proposition.

Doctrine. That it is the sweet temper of a gracious heart to be still with God, "I am still with thee." David awoke in heaven. He was ever above. We read in the old law, that those creatures which crept upon all four, were to be had in abomination; but they which had wings to fly, and legs to leap withall, were accounted clean, Lev. 11:20, 21. Those are among the unclean, and are abominable to God, whose souls creep upon the earth; but they who have the legs and wings of grace to mount up with, who are still with God, these are pure and precious in God's eyes. For the illustration of this point there are three things to be explained and amplified.

- I. What it is to be still with God
- II. In what sense the soul is still with God.
- III. Why a gracious heart is still with God.

I. What it is to be still with God. In general, it is to have a sweet intercourse and communion with God; "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus," 1 John 1:3. In prayer we speak to God; in the sacrament he kisseth us with the kisses of his lips, he

giveth us a privy seal of his love.

II. In what sense the soul is said to be still with God. I answer, the soul is still with God in five manner of ways.

1. By contemplation. So Ainsworth understands the text. I am still with thee, that is, by divine contemplation. David's thoughts were ever and anon running upon God. So verse 17. "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" David's mind was a mint, he coined most gold, most of his thoughts were heavenly. Thoughts are as travellers and passengers in the soul; David's thoughts were still travelling towards the Jerusalem above. In David's dangers God was still with him; in David's contemplations he was still with God. Anaxagoras said, he was born to contemplate heaven. Thus a Christian is still with God: he is viewing glory, his thoughts are all packed up and gone.

2. The soul is still with God by desire. His anchor is cast in heaven, Heb. 6:19. and he is carried thither with the sails of desire. David did shoot his heart into heaven by desire; he had strong pantings after God; "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee?" Psa. 73:25. He saith not, he had nothing upon earth, he had his crown and sceptre; but nothing he desired like God; "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," Psa. 42:1. The hart, as historians observe, is a dry, thirsty creature, especially when chased by the hunter: then nature is on fire, and must have water to quench it; thus the pious soul pants after the refreshing streams of Christ's blood. And these desires of a Christian are rightly terminated; he desires as well conformity to Christ in grace, as communion with him in glory; he desires the Sun of righteousness, not only for its refreshing beams, but also for his healing wings; he desires not only Christ's presence, but also his image. Lord give me thyself, that I may be more holy; what should I do in heaven with this unholy heart; what converse could I have with God or angels? thus the soul is still with God by desire, and he desires not only mercy, but grace.

3. The soul is still with God by love. Where a man's love is, there he is; what an egress and expansion of heart is there to that

which we love. Bonaventure calls love the wing of the soul; on this wing did David fly to heaven. "I am still with thee." Love hath this property, it unites at a distance; it fixes the heart upon the object. Thus the love-sick spouse when she could not see Christ, yet she embraced him in her affections; when her eye was not upon him, yet her love was; "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" Cant. 3:3. Christ, my love, is crucified, said Ignatius. As Christ was fastened to the cross, so he is to a Christian's heart. A true saint is like the tribe of Manasseh, half of the tribe was on this side Jordan, and half on the other side in the holy land, Josh. 1:14. so it is with a saint; half of him is on this side, and half in the holy land; his flesh is on earth, his heart in heaven. As it was said by Paul, "Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell," 2 Cor. 12:2, so it may be said of a good Christian, it is hard to tell whether he be in the body or out of the body; his love is in heaven, he is lodged in the tree of life. The fire of love boils the heart as high as heaven.

4. The soul is still with God by faith; unbelief is called "a drawing back from God," Heb. 10:39. and faith "drawing near to God," Heb. 10:22. By an eye of faith, through the perspective glass of a promise, we look into heaven. The people of Israel stood in the outer court of the temple, but the high priest "entered within the veil," into the holy of holies: thus the senses stand in the outer court of the body, but faith enters within the veil; it sees Christ clothed with the robe of our human nature, and sitting down in glory above the angels; faith embraces Christ. Austin moves the question, how shall I put out a long arm to reach Christ in heaven? believe, saith he, and thou hast laid hold on him. Faith is the golden clasp that knits us to Christ. By faith we put on Christ as a garment, Rom. 13:14. By faith we receive and concoct him as food, Col. 2:6. By faith we are ingrafted into him as the scions into the stock, John 15:5. Indeed a believer's life is out of himself; he lives more in Christ than he lives in himself; as the beam lives in the sun, as the branch in the root, Col. 3:3. even as Judah said concerning Jacob, "his life is bound up in the lad's life," Gen. 44:30, so is a believer's life bound up in Christ. And

thus is the gracious soul ever with God, by faith.

5. A Christian is still with God in the whole course and tenor of his life. Not only his heart is in heaven, but his conversation too, Phil. 3:20. Our deportment and carriage is in heaven; we walk as burgesses of that city. It is said of Christ, "his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem," Luke 9:53. A good Christian should be known by his face; his outward carriage and demeanour should show that he is going to the Jerusalem above. Socrates being asked of what country he was, answered he was a citizen of the world: a true saint is a citizen of heaven; it is known what place he belongs to by his speech, habit, gesture. There is a kind of angelical brightness on him; he shines in holiness, as Moses' face shone when he had been with God in the mount. He is still doing angels' work; his life is a very heaven upon earth. "Noah walked with God," Gen. 6:9. And in this sense the pious soul is still with God, he walks unweariedly with God; though he meets with some rubs and difficulties in the way, yet still he keeps his walk: and thus we have seen in what sense a gracious soul is still with God. The eagle may sometimes sit upon a low bough, but her nest is built high, Job 39:27. A Christian walks upon the surface of the earth, but his nest is built upon the Rock Christ. The moon is seen in the water, yet it is seated in the firmament. So a Christian is seen here below, but he is above, "he is still with God."

III. Why a gracious heart is still with God. There are five reasons why it is so.

1. From the nature of grace. Grace carries the soul up towards God. Grace is like fire. It is the nature of fire to ascend. You that lie grovelling on the earth, feeding like the serpent on dust, or like eels wrapping yourselves in the mud and slime of the world, had you that new and holy principle of grace infused, your souls would sparkle upwards, you would "mount up to heaven as eagles," Isa. 40:31. Had you the sharp eye of faith to see Christ, you would soon have the swift wing of desire to fly to him.

2. From the magnetical power of God's Spirit. The Spirit hath not only a soul purifying, but a soul elevating power. As the sun exhales and draws up the vapours from the earth, so the Spirit

draws up the heart to God; “The Spirit lifted me up,” Ezek. 3:14. Though there be grace in the heart which would be still mounting upward, yet there is much corruption to pull us down. A Christian in this life is both checked and spurred; grace spurs him forward in his way to heaven, and then corruption checks him. Now here the Spirit comes in and draws up the heart to God; which is as mighty a power, as if you should see a millstone drawn up into the sun.

3. A gracious heart is still with God, because he is the centre of the soul; and where should it ever be but in its centre? while the heart is on the earth it shakes and trembles, like the needle in the compass, till it turns to God. God is the proper orb where the soul doth fix. A Christian rests in God, as the bee in the hive, as the bird in the nest; “Return to thy rest, O my soul,” Psa. 116:7. Noah’s dove was never well till it was in the ark. The ark was a type of Christ.

4. The soul is still with God, because of those dear relations it hath to God. There are all the terms of consanguinity [a blood relation]. God is our Father, John 20:17. and where should the child be but with its father? He is our husband, Isa. 54:5. and where should the wife be but with her husband? He is our friend, John 15:15. now friends desire to be still together. God is our rock, 2 Sam. 22:2, where should Christ’s doves be but in the clefts of this blessed rock? God is the saint’s treasure, and “where the treasure is, there will their hearts be also.”

5. The gracious soul is still with God, because of those rare excellencies which are in God.

(1). Fullness. Every one desires to be at a full fountain. “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell,” Col. 1:19. Observe, Christ is not only said to be full in the concrete, but fullness in the abstract, nay, in him is all fullness. A vessel may be full of water, but that is not all fullness, it is not full of wine; a chest may be full of silver, but that is not all fullness, it is not full of pearl; but in Christ is all fullness. He is bread to strengthen, John 6:48. Wine to comfort, John 15:1. Gold to enrich, Rev. 3:18. He is all, and in all, Col. 3:11.

Thus there is a variety of fullness in the Lord Jesus. O Christian, what is it thou needest? Dost thou want quickening grace? Christ is the prince of life, Acts 3:15. Dost thou want healing grace? Christ hath made a medicine of his own body to cure thee, Isa. 53:5. Dost thou want cleansing grace? there is the bath of his blood to wash thee. "The blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all our sin," 1 John 1:7. Let not the poets tell us of their Aonia and Kastalia, fountains in which they supposed their nymphs to have washed: these waters distilled out of Christ's side are infinitely more pure. Pliny saith, that the water courses of Rome are the world's wonder. Oh had he known these sacred water-courses in Christ's blood, how would he have been stricken with admiration: And do you wonder that the soul is still with Christ, when there is all fullness in him?

Nay, but that all is not all: the apostle goes further; it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. To note the duration of this fullness; it is not transient but immanent. This fullness is not in Christ, as the water in the pipe or spout: the spout may be full of water, but it continues not there; water doth not dwell in the spout, but this fullness is in Christ, as light in the sun; it dwells there. Christ's fullness is a never-failing fullness: what can be said more? Nay, but the apostle carries it yet higher. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead; if Christ had all the fullness of the creation, the treasures of the earth, the holiness of the angels, yet this could not satisfy the soul. In him there is the fullness of the Godhead, the riches of the Deity are in him; and the communication of this blessed fullness, Eph. 3:19. so far as there is a capacity to receive, is that which satisfies the soul, and fills it brim full; and, if there be such a plenitude and fullness in God, no wonder a gracious heart desires to be still with God.

(2). Sweetness. God is love, 1 John 4:8. Every one desires to be with them from whom they receive most love. The Lord doth often make himself known to the soul in an ordinance, as he did to the disciples in breaking of bread, Luke 24:35. He manifests himself in the comforts of his Spirit, which are so sweet and ravishing, that they pass all understanding, Gal. 5:22. and do you

wonder the soul is so strongly carried out after God? Truly if it be still with God, to speak with reverence, it is owing to God. He gives those jewels and bracelets, those love-tokens, that the soul cannot but desire to be still with God.

Use 1. It shows us an art how to be in heaven before our time; namely, by being still with God. A good Christian begins his heaven here; grace translates him into the paradise of God. Elijah left his mantle behind, but he was taken up in a fiery chariot; so it is with a saint, the mantle of the flesh is left behind, but his soul is carried up in a fiery chariot of love.

Use 2. Is of reproof; and it consists of two branches.

1. It reproves them that are never with God; they live without God in the world, Eph. 2:12. It is the characteristic note of a wicked man, God is not in all his thoughts, Psa. 10:4. He never thinks of God, unless with horror and amazement, as the prisoner thinks of the judge and the assizes; and here two sorts of sinners are indicted.

(1). Such as are still with their sins. A child of God, though sin be with him, yet he is not with sin, his will is against sin; "That which I do I allow not," Rom. 7:15. he would fain shake this viper into the fire; he forsakes sin, but sin will not forsake him; so that though sin be with him, yet he is not with sin. But a wicked man and sin are together, as two lovers mutually solacing and embracing. A wicked man is "a worker of iniquity," Luke 13:27. like a workman that follows his trade in his shop.

(2). Such as are still with the world. It is counted almost a miracle to find a diamond in a vein of gold; and it is as great a miracle to find Christ, that precious stone, in an earthly heart. The world is men's Diana; "they mind earthly things," Phil. 3:19. Like the ostrich, though she hath wings, yet, by reason of the weightiness of her body, cannot fly high, most men are so weighed down with thick clay, Hab. 2:6. that they cannot soar aloft; they are like Saul, hid among the stuff, 1 Sam. 10:22. like Sisera, who had his head nailed to the earth, Judg. 4:21. so their hearts are nailed to the earth. Absalom's beauty stole away the

hearts of Israel from their king, 2 Sam. 15:6. the world's bewitching beauty steals away men's hearts from God. It is sad when the husband sends his wife a jewel, and she so falls in love with the jewel that she forgets her husband: an estate should be a loadstone to draw men nearer to God, but it is often a millstone to sink them to hell.

There is a moderate use of these things, but there is a danger in the exercise. The bee may suck a little honey from the leaf, but put it in a barrel of honey, and it dies.

Christians must stave off the world, that it get not into their hearts, Psa. 62:10. for, as the water is useful to the ship, and helps it to sail the better to the haven, (but let the water get into the ship, if it be not pumped out at the leak, it drowns the ship), so riches are useful and convenient for our passage. We sail more comfortably with them through the troubles of this world: but if the water get into the ship, if the love of riches get into the heart, then we are drowned with them, 1 Tim. 6:9.

2. It reproves them that are seldom with God. They are sometimes with God, but not still with God. The shell-fish, as naturalists observe, hath so little life in it, and moves so slow, that it is hard to determine whether it lives a vegetative or a sensitive life: so it may be said of many Christians, their motion heavenward is so slow and inconstant, that we can hardly know whether the life of grace be in them or not; they are seldom with God; "Thou hast left thy first love," Rev. 2:4. Many professors have almost lost their acquaintance with God. Time was when they could weep at a sermon; but now these wells are stopped. Time was when they were tender of sin; the least hair would make the eye weep, the least sin would make conscience smite; now they can digest this poison. Time was when they trembled at the threatenings of the word; now, with the leviathan, they can "laugh at the shaking of a spear," Job 41:29. Time was when they "called the sabbath a delight," Isa. 58:13. the queen of days; how did they wait with joy for the rising of the Sun of Righteousness on that day! what pantings of soul after God! what mounting up of affections! but now the case is altered, "What a weariness is it to

serve the Lord!” Mal. 1:13. Time was when they delighted in the word, (indeed it is a glass that mends the eyes of those that look on it), now they have laid it aside; seldom do they look in this glass. Time was when they could send forth strong cries in prayer, Heb. 5:7. but now the wings of prayer are clipt; they come like cold suitors to God, their petitions do even cool between their lips; as if they would teach God to deny. Oh why have you left off your communion with God! “What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?” Jer. 2:5. Let Christians lay this sadly to heart: “Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works,” Rev. 2:5. You are in a spiritual lethargy: O never leave till your hearts are screwed up to such a heavenly frame as here David’s was, “When I awake I am still with thee.” And that brings me to the next.

Use 3. The third use is of exhortation. To persuade all those who profess themselves Christians, to imitate this blessed pattern in the text, “be still with God.” You shall never go to heaven when you die, unless you begin heaven here. The church in the Revelation hath a crown of stars on her head, and the moon under her feet, Rev. 12:1. Christ is not to be found in the furrows, but upon the pinnacle; now that you may get your hearts loosened from these things below, and be still with God, I shall only propound two arguments.

(1). Consider how unworthy it is for a Christian to have his heart set upon the world. It is unworthy of his soul. The soul is dignified with honour, it is a noble coin that hath a divine impress stamped upon it; it is capable of communion with God and angels: now it is too far below a man to spend the affections and operations of this heaven-born soul upon drossy things. It is as if one should embroider sackcloth with gold, or set a diamond in clay.

(2). It is unworthy of his profession. “Seekest thou great things for thyself?” Jer. 45:5. What! thou Baruch! thou who art a godly man! a Levite: Oh how sordid is it for him who hath his hope in heaven, to have his heart upon the earth! It is just as if a king should leave his throne, and follow the plough; or as if a man

should leave a golden mine, to dig in a gravel-pit. The lapwing hath a crown on her head, and yet feeds on dung; a fit emblem of those who have a crown of profession shining on their head, yet feed with eagerness on these things below. Christians should deny themselves, but not undervalue themselves; they should be humble, but not base. If Alexander would not exercise at the Olympics, it being too far below him, (kings do not use to run races), shall they then who are the holy seed, the heirs of glory, disparage themselves by a pursuit too eager after these contemptible things.

The second argument to persuade us to be still with God, is, to consider what a rare and excellent life this is; which will appear in four particulars.

[1]. To be still with God is the most noble life. It is as much above the life of reason, as reason is above the life of a plant; the true Christian is like a star in the highest orb, he looks no lower than a crown; grace puts high thoughts, princely affections, a kind of heavenly ambition into the soul. Grace raiseth a Christian above himself; it makes him as Caleb, a man of another spirit; he lives in the altitudes, his thoughts are lodged among angels, and the “spirits of just men made perfect:” and is not this the most noble life to be still with God? The academics compare the soul of man to a fowl mounting up with her wings in the air: thus with the wings of grace, the soul flies aloft, and takes a prospect of heaven.

[2]. To be still with God is the most satisfying life, nothing else will be so. “All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full,” Eccl. 1:7. Let all the golden streams of worldly delights run into the heart of man, yet the heart is it not full. Strain out the quintessence of the creature, it turns to froth, “Vanity of vanities,” Eccl. 1:2, but in God is sweet satisfaction and contentment. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, Psa. 63:5. Here is a hive of sweetness, a mirror of beauty, a magazine of riches; here is the river of pleasure, where the soul bathes with infinite delight, Psa. 36:8, and this river hath a fountain at the bottom, “For with thee is the fountain of life,” verse 9. and is not this most

satisfactory? It is a wise observation of Picus Mirandula, that in the creation of the world, God gave the water to the fish, the earth to the beasts, the air to the fowls, and afterward, made man in his own image, that man might say, “Lord, there is nothing upon earth to be desired besides Thee,” what can satisfy my soul, but to be still with thee?

[3]. To be still with God is the most comfortable life. What sweet harmony and music is in such a soul! The bird, the higher it takes its flight, the sweeter it sings: so the higher the soul is raised above the world, the sweeter joy it hath. How is the heart inflamed in prayer! How is it ravished in holy meditation: What joy and peace in believing! Rom. 15:13. and these joys are those honey-streams which flow out of the rock Christ: tell me, is it not comfortable to be in heaven? He who is still with God, carries heaven about him: he hath those prelibations [foretastes] and tastes of God’s love, which are the beginnings of heaven, Rom. 8:23. So sweet is this kind of life, that it can drop sweetness into the troubles and disquiets of the world, that we shall be scarce sensible of them. It can turn the prison into a paradise; the furnace into a festival; it can sweeten death. A soul elevated by grace, can rejoice to think of dying: death will but cut the string, and the soul, that bird of paradise, shall fly away and be at rest.

[4]. To be still with God is the most durable life. The life of sense will fail; we must shortly bid farewell to all our outward comforts; these blossoms will drop off. We read of a “sea of glass mingled with fire,” Rev. 15:2. Bullinger, and other learned expositors, understand by that sea of glass, the world. Indeed it is a fit emblem of it; the world is a sea, and it is seldom calm; and it is a sea of glass, slippery; and this glass is mingled with fire, to show that it is of a perishable and consuming nature. Riches take wings, and relations take wings: but to you, who by the wings of grace are still soaring aloft, this life shall never have an end; it is the beginning of an eternal life; happiness is but the cream of holiness: you that are still with God, shall be ever with the Lord, 1 Thess. 4:17. You shall see God in all his embroidered robes of majesty, “We shall see him as he is,” 1 John 3:2. and this sight

will be ravishing, and full of glory. O then, is not this the best kind of life? He who when he awakes is still with God, when he goes to sleep at death, shall be ever with the Lord.

Question. But how shall I arrive at this blessed frame of heart, to be still with God?

Answer 1. Get a right judgment. It is a great matter to have the judgment set right. Get a right judgment of sin, and you will be never with it; get a right judgment of God, and you will be still with him. In God are all combined excellences: how sweet is his love! how satisfying is his presence! But as the painter drew a veil over Agamemnon's face, because the greatness of his grief for his daughter Iphigenia could not be expressed, so when I speak of the glorious perfections in God, I must draw a veil; neither pen nor pencil can set them forth in their orient lustre; the angels here must be silent.

Answer 2. If you would be still with God, watch over your hearts every day; lock up your hearts with God every morning, and give him the key. The heart will be stealing out to vanity. Lord, saith Bernard, there is nothing more flitting than my heart. Keep watch and ward there; especially, Christians, look to your hearts after an ordinance; when you have been with God in duty, then expect a temptation. Physicians say, the body must be more carefully looked to when it comes out of a hot bath, for the pores being open, it is in more danger of catching cold: after your spiritual bathing in an ordinance, when you have been at a sermon or sacrament, then take heed that you do not catch cold.

Answer 3. Beware of remissness in duty. When you begin to slacken the reins, and abate your former heat and vigour in religion, there steals insensibly a deadness upon the heart, and by degrees there ariseth a sad estrangement between God and the soul. And, brethren, how hard a work will you find it to get your hearts up again, when they are once down! a weighty stone that hath been rolled up to the top of a steep hill, and then falls down to the bottom, how hard is it to get it up again!

O take heed of a dull, lazy temper in God's service: we are bid to be "fervent in spirit," Rom. 12:11. The Athenians inquiring at

the oracle of Apollo, why their plagues continued so long, the oracle answered them, they must double their sacrifices: those who would hold constant communion with God, must double their devotion; they must be much in prayer, and mighty in prayer. We read that the coals were to be put to the incense, Lev. 16:13. Incense was a type of prayer, and the coals put to the incense was to show, that the heart of a Christian ought to be inflamed in holy services. Nothing more dangerous than a plodding formality.

Answer 4. If you would be still with God, be much in the communion of Saints. Many Christians live as if this article were blotted out of their creed. How doth one saint whet and sharpen another. As vain company cools good affections, so by being in the communion of saints we are warmed and quickened. Be often among the spices, and you will smell of them. These directions observed, we shall be able to keep our acquaintance with God, and may arrive at this blessed frame, as here David had, “When I awake I am still with thee.”

The fourth of four booklets.

“When I awake I am still with thee” Psalm 139:18.



*“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings as eagles” Isaiah 40:31.*