

“To Be with Christ Is Far Better”  
(Philippians 1:23)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last time, we saw that if you walk with the Lord in holiness from the heart, Jesus has taken away the power of death for you.
  - a. He became a man that He might make an infinite payment for your sins through His death.
  - b. But in so doing He took the power of death away from the devil.
    - (i) Not that Satan has power to kill anyone at will – God is sovereign over life and death.
    - (ii) But that he is the harbinger of death.
      - (a) He killed your first parents.
      - (b) He killed you through them.
      - (c) He works overtime to accuse you to try and drag you down into the eternal death of hell.
      - (d) And if he could, he would make hell that much worse for you by tormenting you throughout all eternity.
    - (iii) Death was the door that turned you over to him; it’s what opened the mouth of hell that it might swallow you down.
    - (iv) But Jesus has taken that power away from him.
2. He has turned death into your friend.
  - a. It no longer opens hell, but the door of heaven for you.
  - b. You don’t have to be afraid of it any longer.

B. Preview.

1. This evening, let’s consider more specifically why death is now your friend and not your enemy – because it brings you to a holy place above where Jesus is.
2. We’ll consider two things: If you walk with the Lord in holiness from the heart, then,
  - a. First, when you die you will enter into heaven.
  - b. Second, and even more glorious, you will enter into your Lord’s presence.
  - c. Paul tells us that this is so much better than anything you have here on earth.

II. Sermon.

A. First, if you are walking with the Lord, when you die you will enter into heaven.

1. First, as we saw earlier when we studied the angels, they will come and take your soul to heaven, “Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22).
  - a. Death may seem frightening; but consider what you will see and experience once you die and only after you die.

- b. These angelic beings will come and convey your soul into paradise.
    - (i) Few of the saints were ever honored by seeing angels during their lives.
    - (ii) But all the saints will see them at death.
    - (iii) Not only will they be a wonder to look at; they will also be holy and delightful company on your trip to heaven.
2. Just after you die, you will also be made perfect for the first time in your life.
- a. No one can enter into heaven who isn't perfectly holy.
  - b. That is what the Lord will make you when you die.
    - (i) This is why Jesus died – this is what He came to give you.
    - (ii) All your guilt was removed when you trusted Him; the power of sin was broken in your life; the process of becoming more like Jesus began.
    - (iii) But it will only be completed once you die and before you enter heaven.
      - (1) All desire for sin will be once and for all removed.
      - (2) And a perfect love will swell in your heart that will never die.
3. Then you will enter into a world of perfect joy and happiness.
- a. You shouldn't look forward to heaven because of the objects that are there.
    - (i) Some want to go there for the pearly gates.
    - (ii) Some want to see the streets of gold.
    - (iii) It's very likely that these are just symbols meant to point to the true riches of heaven.
  - b. You should be looking for something better – for what is really there. Paul writes, "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17).
    - (i) You will have no more sickness, sorrow or suffering. You will experience happiness to a greater level than anything you've ever experienced on earth.
    - (ii) Here, there's always a fly in the ointment, there's always something to take away our happiness – but then will be the time the Lord has ordained for you to be happy, then nothing will be able to spoil that joy. Edwards writes, "It has sometimes looked strange to me that men should be ever brought to such exceeding happiness as that of heaven seems to be, because we find that here providence will not suffer any great degree of happiness: when men have something in which they hope to find very great joy, there will be something to spoil it. Providence seems watchfully to take care they should have no exceeding joy and satisfaction in this world. But indeed this, instead of being one argument against the greatness of heaven's happiness, seems to argue for it. For we cannot suppose that the reason why providence will not suffer men to enjoy great happiness here is that he is averse to the creature's happiness, but because this is not a time for it. To everything there is an appointed season and time, and this agreeable to God's method of dispensation, that a thing should be sought in vain out of its appointed time. God reserves happiness to be bestowed hereafter, that is the appointed time for it, and that is the

reason he does not give it now. No man, let him be never so strong or wise, shall alter this divine establishment by anticipating happiness before his appointed time. It is so in all things. Sometimes there is an appointed time for man's prosperity upon earth, and then nothing can hinder his prosperity; and then when that time is past, then comes an appointed time for his adversity, and then all things conspire for his ruin, and all his strength and skill shall not help him. History verifies this with respect to many kings, generals, and great men: one while they conquer all and nothing can stand before them (all things conspire for their advancement, and all that oppose it are confounded), and after a while it is right the reverse. So has it been with respect to the kingdoms and monarchies of the world: one while is their time to flourish, and then God will give all into their hands and will destroy those that oppose their flourishing, and then after that comes the time of their decay and ruin and then everything runs backward, and all helpers are vain. Jer. 27" (MS 585).

- (iii) Just how great will these joys be? As great as the price that was paid to secure them. Again Edwards writes, "If nothing be too much to be given to man, and to be done for man in the means of procuring his happiness, nothing will be too much to be given to him as the end, no degree of happiness is too great for him to enjoy. When I think how great this happiness is, sometimes it is ready to seem almost incredible [i.e., vessels cast into an ocean of love]. But the death and sufferings of Christ make everything credible that belongs to this blessedness. For if God would so contrive to show his love in the manner and means of procuring our happiness, nothing can be incredible in the degree of happiness itself. If all that God does about it be of a piece, he will also set infinite wisdom on work to make their happiness and glory great in the degree of it. If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Nothing could have been such a confirmation of their blessedness as this" (MS 576).
- (iv) The company in heaven won't be so bad either. "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" (Heb. 12:22-23).
  - (a) After the angels have conveyed you to heaven, you will be free to fellowship with them.
  - (b) All the other saints who have gone before you, who have also been perfected, will be there – the Apostle Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Edwards, Whitefield, Wesley, and Spurgeon, are all there, and you will be free to fellowship with them.

B. But let's not forget what really makes heaven to be heaven: Second, when you die, you will enter into your Lord's presence. The author to the Hebrews goes on to say that not only the angels and glorified saints are there, but also "Jesus, the mediator

of a new covenant” (v. 24). When Paul says in our text that heaven is very much better, it’s because you will be with Christ (Phil. 1:23).

1. Heaven is a wonderful place, but if Jesus wasn’t there, the saints would rather not be there either.
  - a. The Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit are what make heaven to be heaven.
    - (i) The Father is the One who loved you, who chose you, who sent His Son for you that you might enter into His heaven – His presence (along with the Son and Spirit) is the beatific vision that you long to see.
    - (ii) The Son is the One who came for you, lived for you, died for you, that by His measureless love, He might have you as His own.
    - (iii) The Spirit is the One who indwelt you, who filled you with His love, who worked faith in you, and who in heaven will perfectly sanctify you with His presence.
    - (iv) The company of saints and angels is glorious, but if God wasn’t there, it wouldn’t be enough.
    - (v) Augustine once wrote, “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.”
    - (vi) You, along with the saints and angels, would be pining in heaven for God if He wasn’t there.
    - (vii) He is what makes heaven to be heaven.
  - b. The Puritans went so far as to say, if God was not there, if He was instead in hell, the true believer would rather be there.
2. Your heart will finally be satisfied in heaven, because the Lord is there.
  - a. That down payment you received when you were first saved, that gave you a hunger and thirst for the full inheritance, will finally be fulfilled.
  - b. Your heart that has longed for God’s presence will at last be content.
  - c. No one can be happy as long as the object of their love is absent.
    - (i) The Lord has given you just enough of His presence through His ordinances to hold you over here below.
    - (ii) But there you will finally be at rest. Jesus says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matt. 5:6).
    - (iii) He alone can satisfy you for eternity, because He alone is infinite.
    - (iv) That’s why to depart and be with Christ is very much better.
    - (v) Do you thirst for the Lord this evening?
      - (a) If you don’t, may the Lord graciously give you that thirst.
      - (b) If you do, may He give you a bit more satisfaction as you meet Him at His table. Amen.