

Forever With The Lord (1877)

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that believers are assured of an unbroken, eternal fellowship with the Lord both now and forever, offering profound comfort in the face of death and separation.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Colossians 3:3, John 15:4, Romans 8:38-39, Psalm 23:4, 2 Corinthians 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10, Revelation 20:4

Topics: "Eternal Fellowship", "Union with Christ"

Description

In his 1877 sermon "Forever With The Lord," C.H. Spurgeon offers profound comfort to believers facing death and loss by emphasizing the eternal and unbreakable fellowship with Jesus Christ. He explores the present spiritual union with Christ, the blessed hope of resurrection, and the joyful reunion with the saints. Spurgeon's devotional message encourages Christians to live in the assurance of God's abiding love and the promise of everlasting life with the Lord.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"So shall we be forever with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

WE know that these words are full of consolation, for the Apostle says in the next verse, "Therefore comfort one another with these words." The very words, it appears, were dictated by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to be repeated by the saints to each other with the view of removing sorrow from the minds of the distressed. The comfort is intended to give us hope in reference to those who have fallen asleep. Look over the list of those beloved in the Lord who have departed from you, to your utmost grief, and let the words of our text be a handkerchief for your tears.

Sorrow not as those that are without hope, for they are with the Lord though they are not with you and, by-and-by, you shall surely meet them where your Lord is the center of fellowship forever and ever. The separation will be very transient—the reunion will be everlasting! These words are, also, intended to comfort the saints with regard to themselves. And I pray that they may be a cordial to any who are sick with fear—a matchless medicine to charm away the heartache from all Believers. The fact that you bear about a dying body is very evident to some of you by your frequent and increasing infirmities and pains and this, it may be, is a source of depression of spirits.

You know that when a few years are gone you must go the way from where you shall not return, but be not dismayed, for you shall not go into a strange country alone and unattended. There is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother who will not fail you nor forsake you! And, moreover, you are going Home—your Lord will be with you while you are departing—and then you will be with Him forever. Therefore, though sickness warns you of the near approach of death, be not in the least dismayed! Though pain and weariness should make your heart and flesh fail, yet doubt not of your triumph through the Redeemer's blood!

Though it should sometimes make your flesh tremble when you remember your many sins and the weakness of your faith, yet be of good cheer, for your sins and weakness of faith will soon be removed far from you—and you shall be in His Presence where there is fullness of joy—and at His right hand where there are pleasures forevermore! Comfort yourselves, then, both with regard to those who have gone before and in reference to the thought of your own departure.

Observe that the comfort which the Apostle here presents to us may be partly derived from the fact of the Resurrection, but not chiefly, for he does not so much refer to the words, "The dead in Christ shall rise," as to these last—"so shall we be forever with the Lord." It is a great Truth of God that you will rise again. It is a sweeter Truth that you will be "forever with the Lord"! There is some consolation, also, in the fact that we shall meet our departed Brothers and Sisters when we shall all be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Blissful will be the general assembling of the redeemed, never again to be broken up—the joy of meeting, never to part, is a sweet remedy for the bitterness of separation.

There is great comfort in it, but the main stress of consolation does not lie even there. It is pleasant to think of the eternal fellowship of the godly above, but the best of all is the promised fellowship with our Lord—"So shall we be forever with the Lord." Whatever else you draw comfort from, neglect not this deep, clear and overflowing well of delight! There are other sources of good cheer in connection with the Glory to be revealed, for Heaven is a many-sided joy. But still, none can excel the glory of communion with Jesus Christ! We comfort one another, in the first place and most constantly with these words, "So shall we be forever with the Lord."

I shall view our text, in order to our comfort at this time, in three lights. I look upon it, first, as a continuance—we are with the Lord even now and we always shall be. Secondly, as an advancement—we shall, before long, be more fully with the Lord than we are now. And thirdly, as a coherence—for we both are and shall be with Him in a close and remarkable manner.

I. I regard the text as A CONTINUANCE of our present spiritual state—"So shall we be forever with the Lord." To my mind, and I think I am not incorrect in so expounding, the Apostle means that nothing shall prevent our continuing to be forever with the Lord. Death shall not separate us, nor the terrors of that tremendous day when the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God shall be heard. By Divine plan and arrangement, all shall be so ordained that, "So shall we be forever with the Lord." By being caught up into the clouds, or in one way or another, our abiding in Christ shall remain unbroken. As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so shall we walk in Him, whether in life or in death.

I understand the Apostle to mean that we are with the Lord now and that nothing shall separate us from Him. Even now, like Enoch, we walk with God and we shall not be deprived of Divine communion. Our fear might be that in the future state something might happen which would become a dividing gulf between us and Christ, but the Apostle assures us that it will not be so—there shall be such plans and methods used

that, "so shall we be forever with the Lord." At any rate, I know that if this is not the Truth of God, here intended, it is a Truth worthy to be expounded and, therefore, I do not hesitate to enlarge upon it.

We are with the Lord in this life in a high spiritual sense. Read you not, in the Epistle to the Colossians, "for you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God"? Were you not "buried with Him in Baptism wherein, also, you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead"? Do you not know what it is to be dead to the world in Him and to be living a secret life with Him? Are you not risen with Christ? Yes, and do you not understand, in some measure, what it is to be raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus? If you are not with Him, Brothers and Sisters, you are not Christians at all, for this is the mark of the Christian— that he follows with Christ.

It is essential to salvation to be a sheep of Christ's fold—no, more—a partaker of Christ's life, a member of His mystical body, a branch of the spiritual vine! Separated from Him we are spiritually dead. He Himself has said, "If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. And men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned." Jesus is not far from any of His people—no, it is our privilege to follow Him wherever He goes—and His loving words to us are, "Abide in Me, and I in you." May He enable us sweetly to realize this! We are, dear Brothers and Sisters, constantly with Christ in the sense of abiding union with Him, for we are joined unto the Lord and are one spirit.

Sometimes this union is very sweetly apparent to ourselves." We know that we are in Him that is true," and in consequence we feel an intense joy, even Christ's own joy fulfilled in us! For the same reason we are at times bowed down with intense sorrow, for being in and with Christ, we have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, being made conformable with His death. This is such sweet sorrow that the more we experience it, the better—

"Live or die, or work or suffer,

Let my weary soul abide,

In all changes whatever,

Sure and steadfast by Your side.

Nothing can delay my progress,

Nothing can disturb my rest,

If I shall, wherever I wander,

Lean my spirit on Your breast."

This companionship is, we trust, made manifest to others by its fruits. It ought always to be so —the life of the Christian should be manifestly a life with Christ. Men should take knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

They should see that there is something in us which could not have been there if it were not for the Son of God—a temper, a spirit, a course of life which could not have come by Nature—but must have been worked in us through Grace which has been received from Him in whom dwells a fullness of Grace, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and Sisters, if we are what we ought to be, our life is spent in conscious

communion growing out of continued union with the Lord Jesus Christ! And if it is so, we have that rich assurance which is written by the Beloved John, "If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you, also, shall continue in the Son and in the Father."

We are with Him, dear Friends, in this sense, too, that His unchanging love is always set upon us, and our love, feeble though it sometimes may be, never quite dies out. In both senses that challenge of the Apostle is true, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" We can say, "I am my Beloved's and His desire is

towards me." And, on the other hand, we, also testify, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." He claims us and we claim Him! He loves us and we love Him! There is a union of heart between us. We are with Him, not against Him! We are in league with Him, enlisted beneath His banner, obedient to His Spirit. For us to live is Christ—we have no other aim!

He is with us by the continued indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is with us and shall be in us forever. His anointing abides on us and because of it we abide in Christ Jesus! He has sent us the Comforter to represent Himself and through that Divine Paraclete He continues to be with us—and so, even now we are forever with the Lord. Our Lord has, also, promised to be with us whenever we are engaged in His work. That is a grand word of encouragement, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Think not, therefore, that it will be the first time of our being with Christ when we shall see Him in Glory, for even now He manifests Himself unto us as He does not unto the world.

Has He not often fulfilled His promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them"? We have heard the sound of our Master's feet behind us when we have been going on His errands. We have felt the touch of His hands when we have come to the forefront of the battle for His sake. And we have known that He dwells in us by His Spirit and is with us by the power with which He has attended our work, and the deeds which He has worked by the Gospel which we have proclaimed. The Lord Jesus is with His Church in her tribulation for His name's sake and He will forever be so, for He forsakes not His saints. "Fear not, I am with you," is as much a word of the Lord under the Gospel as in Old Testament times. By the power of His blessed Spirit Jesus abides with us and through this present dispensation He enables us to be "forever with the Lord."

But, my Brethren, the time is coming when we shall die unless the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout in the meanwhile. Assuredly in the article of death we shall still be with the Lord—

"Death may my soul divide From this abode of clay But love shall keep me near Your side Through all the gloomy way."

"Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." This makes dying such wonderful work to the people of God, for then, especially, is Jesus seen to be near! By death they escape from death—and from now on it is no more death for them to die! When Jesus meets His saints, there seems no iron gate to pass through, but in a moment they close their eyes on earth and open them in Glory!

Beloved, there should be no more bondage through fear of death since Christ attends His people even in their descent into the tomb and strengthens them upon the bed of languishing. This has been a great joy to many departing saints. A dying Believer who was attended by an apothecary who was, also, a child of God, was observed to be whispering to himself while dying. His good attendant, wishing to know what

were his last words, placed his ear against the dying man's lips and heard him repeating to himself, again and again, the words, "Forever with the Lord. Forever with the Lord." When heart and flesh were failing, the departing one knew that God was the strength of his life and his portion forever—and so he chose for his soft, low-whispered, dying song, "Forever with the Lord."

After death we shall abide, awhile, in the separate, disembodied state and we shall know as to our soul what it is to be still with the Lord, for what does the Apostle say? "Knowing that when we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord." The dying thief was to be, that day, with Christ in Paradise, and such shall be our lot as soon as our souls shall have passed out of this tenement of clay into that wondrous state of which we know so little. Our pure spirits shall "come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel."

Who is dismayed when such a prospect opens up before him? Yes, and this body which shall fall asleep, though apparently it shall be destroyed, yet shall not be so, but shall only slumber awhile and then awake again and say, "When I awake I am still with You." Constantly death is described as sleeping in Jesus—that is the state of the saint's mortal frame through the interval between death and resurrection. The angels shall guard our bodies—all that is essential to complete the identity of our body shall be securely preserved so that the very seed which was put into the earth shall rise,

again, in the beauty of efflorescence which becomes it. All, I say, that is essential, shall be preserved intact, because it is still with Christ.

It is a glorious doctrine which is stated by the Apostle in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the 5th chapter, at the 9th and 10th verses, "For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." In due time the last trumpet shall sound and Christ shall come and the saints shall be with Him. The infinite Providence has so arranged that Christ shall not come without His people, for, "Them, also, that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him." The saints shall be with Him in the Advent as they are now. Our souls shall hear the shout of victory and join in it! The voice of the archangel shall be actually heard by all His redeemed and the trumpet of God shall be sounded in the hearing of every one of His beloved, for we shall be with Jesus all through that glorious transaction.

Whatever the glory and splendor of the Second Advent, we shall be with Jesus in it! I am not going to give you glimpses of the revealed future, or offer any suggestion as to the sublime history which is yet to be written, but most certainly there is to be a last general Judgment and then we shall be with Christ, assessors with Him at that day. Being ourselves, first acquitted, we shall take our seat upon the Judgment Bench with Him. What does the Holy Spirit say by the Apostle—"Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know you not that we shall judge angels?" The fallen angels, to their shame, shall, in part, receive the verdict of their condemnation from the lips of men—and thus vengeance shall be taken upon them for all the mischief they have done to the sons of men.

Oh, think of it! Amidst the terror of the tremendous Day you shall be at ease, resting in the love of God and beholding the Glory of Christ and, "so shall you forever be with the Lord." There is, moreover, to be a reign of Christ. I cannot read the Scriptures without perceiving that there is to be a millennial reign, as I believe,

upon the earth and that there shall be new heavens and new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Well, whatever that reign is to be, we shall reign also! "And he that overcomes and keeps My words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of My Father." "And have made us unto our God kings and priests and we shall reign on the earth."

He shall reign, but it will be "before His ancients gloriously." We shall be partakers in the splendors of the latter days, whatever they may be, and, "So shall we be forever with the Lord." The particular incident of the text does not exhaust the words, but you may apply them to the whole story of God's own children. From the first day of the spiritual birth of the Lord's immortals until they are received up into the seventh Heaven to dwell with God, their history may be summed up in these words, "So shall we be forever with the Lord." Whether caught up into the clouds or here below on this poor afflicted earth—whether in Paradise or in the renovated earth, in the grave or in Glory—we shall always be with the Lord!

And when comes the end and God alone shall reign and the mediatorial kingdom shall cease, ages, ages and ages shall revolve, but "so shall we be forever with the Lord." The saints immortal shall be with their Covenant Head, free from sorrow. All tendency to sin, all fear of change or death shall be gone! And their intimate communion will last on forever—

"Blessed state! Beyond conception! Who its vast delights can tell? May it be my blissful portion, With my Savior there to dwell."

I think the text looks like a continuation of what is already begun, only rising to something higher and better. To be with Christ is life eternal—this we have already and shall continue to have and—"so shall we be forever with the Lord."

II. Secondly, most assuredly, Brethren, the text is A GREAT ADVANCEMENT—"So shall we be forever with the Lord." It is an advancement upon this present state, for however spiritual-minded we may be and however in consequence, thereof, we may be very near unto our Lord Jesus, yet still we know that while we are present in the body we are absent from the Lord. This life, at its very best, is still comparatively an absence from the Lord, but in the world to come we shall be more perfectly at home. Now, we cannot, in the highest sense, be with Christ, for we must, according to the Apostle's phraseology, "depart, and be with Christ; which is far better." But there we shall be forever beholding His face unveiled. Earth is not Heaven, though the Believer begins the heavenly life while he is upon it. We are not with Christ as to place, nor as to actual sight—but in Glory we shall be!

And it is an advancement, in the next place, upon the present state of the departed, for though their souls are with the Lord, yet their bodies are subject to corruption. Still does the sepulcher contain the blessed dust of the fathers of our Israel. Though scattered to the four winds of Heaven, the martyr's ashes are still with us. The glorified saints are not as yet consciously "with the Lord" as to their complete manhood, but when the grand event shall occur of which Paul speaks, the body shall be reanimated. This is our glorious hope! We can say with the Patriarch Job—"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

Know you not, Brothers and Sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God? That is, as they are. But this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality—and then

shall the entire manhood, the perfected manhood, the fully developed manhood, of which this manhood is, as it were, but a shriveled seed—be in the fullest and most Divine sense, forever with the Lord! This is an advancement, even, upon the present state of departed saints in Paradise!

And now let us consider this glorious condition to which we shall be advanced. We shall be with the Lord in the strongest possible meaning of that language. So with Him that we shall never mind earthly things again, shall have no more to go into city business, or into the workshop, or into the field. We shall have nothing to do but to be engaged forever with Him in such occupations as shall have no tendency to take us off from communion with Him. We shall be so with Him as to have no sin to becloud our view of Him! Our understanding will be delivered from all the injury which sin has worked in it and we shall know Him even as we are known. We shall see Him as a familiar Friend and sit with Him at His marriage feast. We shall be with Him so as to have no fear of His ever being grieved and hiding His face from us again.

We shall never again be made to cry out in bitterness of spirit, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him." We shall always know His love, always return it and always swim in the full stream of it, enjoying it to the fullest! There will be no lukewarmness to mar our fellowship. He shall never have to say to us, "I would you were either cold or hot." There shall be no weariness to suspend our ceaseless bliss—we shall never have to cease from fellowship with Him because our physical frame is exhausted through the excessive joy of our heart—the vessel will be strengthened to hold the new wine. No doubts shall intrude into our rest, neither doctrinal doubts nor doubts about our interest in Him, for we shall be so consciously with Him as to have risen 10,000 leagues above that gloomy state.

We shall know that He is ours, for His left hand shall be under our head and His right hand shall embrace us and we shall be with Him beyond all hazard of ever losing Him. The chief blessedness seems, to me, to lie in this, that we will always be with Him and with Him always. Now we are with the Lord in conscious enjoyment, sometimes, but then we are away from Him. But there it will be constant, unwavering fellowship! No break shall ever occur in the intimate communion of the saints with Christ. Here we know that our high days and bright Sabbaths with their sweetest joys, must have their eventides and then come the work-days with the burden of the week upon them. But there the Sabbath is eternal, the worship endless, the praise unceasing, the bliss unbounded. "Forever with the Lord."

Speak of a thousand years of reigning? What is that compared with, "forever with the Lord"? The millennium is little compared with "forever"—a millennium of millenniums would be nothing to it! There can come no end to us and no end to our bliss, since there can be no end to Him—"because I live, you shall live also." "Forever with the Lord." What will it mean? I remember a sermon upon this text by a notable preacher, of which the heads were as follows— "Forever life, forever light, forever love, forever peace, forever rest, forever joy." What a chain of delights! What more can heart imagine or hope desire? Carry those things in your mind and you will get, if you can drink into them, some idea of the blessedness which is contained in being forever with the Lord!

But remember these are only the fruits—not the root of the joy. Jesus is better than all these! His company is more than the joy which comes out of it. I do not care so much for, "life forever," nor for, "light forever," as I do for, "forever with the Lord." Oh, to be with Him! I ask no other bliss and cannot imagine anything more heavenly. Why, the touch of the hem of His garment healed the sick woman! The sight of Him was enough to give life to us when we were dead! What, then, must it be to be with Him actually, consciously and always? To be with Him no more by faith, but in very deed with

Him forever? My soul is ready to swoon away with too much joy as she drinks in even her shallow measure into the meaning of this thought—and I dare not venture further.

I must leave you to muse your souls into it, for it needs quiet thought and room for free indulgence of holy imagination till you make your soul dream of this excess of joy. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by

His Spirit."—

"O glorious hour! O blessed abode!

I shall be near and like my God.

And flesh and sin no more control

The sacred pleasures of my soul." We love to think of being with Jesus under the aspect which the text specially suggests to us. We are to be forever with the Redeemer, not only as Jesus the Savior, but as the Lord. Here we have seen Him on the Cross and lived thereby. We are with Him now in His Cross-bearing and shame and it is well—but our eternal companionship with Him will enable us to rejoice in Him as the Lord. What did our Master say in His blessed prayer? "I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory."

It will be Heaven for us to be forever with Him as the Lord! Oh, how we shall delight to obey Him as our Lord! How we shall triumph as we see what a Lord He is over all the universe! And what a conqueror He is over all His enemies! He will be more and more the Lord to us as we see all things put under Him. We shall forever hail Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. How we will adore Him, there, when we see Him in His Glory! We worship Him, now, and are not ashamed to believe that the Man of Nazareth is, "very God of very God." But oh, how His Deity will shine upon us with infinite brightness when we come to be near Him! Thanks be to His name, we shall be strengthened to endure the sight and we shall rejoice to see ourselves in the full blaze of His glory!

Then shall we see what our poet endeavored to describe when he said—

"Adoring saints around Him stand,

And thrones and powers before Him fall!

The God shines gracious through the Mian,

And sheds sweet glories on them all." We shall be forever with the Lord and His Lordship shall be most upon our minds! He has been raised into Glory and honor and is no more able to suffer shame!—

"No more the bloody spear,

The Cross and nails no more! For Hell itself shakes at His word, And all the heavens adore."

III. Now we come to our third point and shall consider what, for lack of a better word, I entitle A COHERENCE. Those who are acquainted with the Greek language know that the, "with," here, is not meta, which signifies being in the same place with a person, but one which goes much further and implies

a coherence—the two who are with each other are intimately connected. Let me show you what I mean.

We are to be forever with the Lord. Now, the Christian's life is like the life of His Lord and so it is a life with Christ. He was in all things with His Brethren and Grace makes us to be with Him. Just hurriedly look at your spiritual experience and your Lord's life and see the parallel. When you were newly born as a Christian, you were born as Jesus Christ was, for you were born of the Holy Spirit. What happened after that? The devil tried to destroy the new life in you, just as Herod tried to kill your Lord—you were with Christ in danger, early and imminent. You grew in stature and in Grace and, while Grace was yet young, you staggered those who were about you with the things you said, did and felt, for they could not understand you! Even thus, when He went up to the Temple, our Lord amazed the doctors who gathered around Him.

The Spirit of God rested upon you, not in the same measure, but still, as a matter of fact, He did descend upon you as He did upon your Lord. You have been with Him in Jordan's stream and have received the Divine acknowledgment that you are, indeed, the child of God. Your Lord was led into the wilderness to be tempted—and you, too, have been tempted by the devil. You have been with the Lord all along, from the first day until now. If you have been, by Grace,

enabled to live as you should, you have trod the separated path with Jesus! You have been in the world, but not of it, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. Therefore you have been despised—you have had to take your share of being unknown and misrepresented because you are even as He was in the world. "Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not."

As He was here to serve, you have been with Him as a servant. You have carried His yoke and counted it an easy load. You have been crucified to the world with Him. You know the meaning of His Cross and delight to bear it after Him. You are dead to the world with Him and wish to be as one buried to it. You have already, in your measure, partaken of His Resurrection and are living in newness of life. Your life story is still to be like the life story of your Lord, only painted in miniature. The more you watch the life of Christ the more clearly you will see the life of a spiritual man depicted in it—and the more clearly will you see what the saints' future will be.

You have been with Christ in life and you will be with Him when you come to die. You will not die the expiatory death which fell to His lot, but you will die feeling that "it is finished" and you will breathe out your soul, saying, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." Then our Lord went to Paradise and you will go there, too. You shall enjoy a sojourn where He spent His interval in the disembodied state. You shall be with Him and like He is and then like He, you shall rise when your third morning comes. "After two days will He revive us. On the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." "Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise."

You shall also ascend as Christ did. Do you catch the thought? How did He ascend? In clouds. "A cloud received Him out of their sight" and a cloud shall receive you. You shall be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall you be always with the Lord, in the sense of being like He, walking with Him in experience and passing through the same events. That likeness shall continue forever and forever. Our lives shall run parallel with that of our Lord! Think, then, Beloved—we are to be like Christ as to our character! We are to be with the Lord by sharing His moral and spiritual likeness! Conformed to His image, we shall be adorned with His beauty!

When the mother of Darius saw two persons entering her pavilion, she, being a prisoner, bowed to the one whom she supposed to be Alexander. It turned out to be Hyphestion, the King's favorite. Upon discovering that it was Hyphestion the lady humbly begged Alexander's pardon for paying obeisance to the wrong person, but Alexander answered, "You have not mistaken, Madam, for he, also, is Alexander," meaning that he loved him so much that he regarded him as his other self. Our Lord looks on His Beloved as one with Himself and makes them like Himself. You remember, Brothers and Sisters, how John bowed down before one of his fellow servants, the prophets in Heaven? It was a great blunder to make, but I dare say you and I will be likely to make the same, for the saints are so like their Lord!

Don't you know that "we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is"? Christ will rejoice to see them all covered with the Glory which His Father has given Him! He will not be ashamed to call them Brethren. Those poor people of His who were so full of infirmity and mourned over it so much—they shall be so like He that they shall be at once seen to be His Brothers and Sisters! Where shall such favored ones be found? We shall be with Him in the sense that we shall be partakers of all the blessedness and Glory which our adorable Lord now enjoys. We shall be accepted together with Him. Is He the Beloved of the Lord? Does His Father's heart delight in Him, as well it may?

Behold you, also, shall be called Hephzibah, for His delight shall be in you! You shall be beloved of the Father's soul. Is He enriched with all manner of blessings beyond conception? So shall you be, for He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as He has chosen us in Him! Is Christ exalted? Oh, how loftily is He lifted up to sit upon a glorious high Throne forever! But you shall sit upon His Throne with Him and share His exaltation as you have shared His humiliation! Oh, the delight of thus being joint-heirs with Christ and with Him in the possession of all that He possesses!

What is Heaven? It is the place which His love suggested, which His genius invented, which His bounty provided, which His royalty has adorned, which His wisdom has prepared, which He, Himself, glorifies! In that Heaven you are to be with Him forever! You shall dwell in the King's own palace! Its gates of pearl and streets of gold shall not be too good for you. You who love Him are to abide with Him forever—not near Him in a secondary place, as a servant lives at the lodge gate of His master's mansion—but with Him in the same palace in the metropolis of the universe! In a word, Believers are to be identified with Christ forever!

That seems, to me, to be the very life and essence of the text—with Him forever—that is, identified with Him forever. Do they ask for the Shepherd? They cannot behold Him to perfection except as surrounded by His sheep! Will the King be illustrious? How can that be if His subjects are lost? Do they ask for the Bridegroom? They cannot imagine Him in the fullness of joy without His bride! Will the Head be blessed? It could not be if it were separated from the members. Will Christ be forever glorified? How can He be if He shall lose His jewels? He is the Foundation and what would He be if all His people were not built upon Him into the similitude of a palace?

O Brothers and Sisters, there shall be no Christ without Christians! There shall be no Savior without the saved ones! There shall be no Elder Brother without the younger brethren! There shall be no Redeemer without His redeemed! We are His fullness and He must have us with Him. We are identified with Him forever! Nothing can ever divide us from Him. Oh, joy, joy forever! Hallelujah!—

"Since Christ and we are one, Why should we doubt or fear? If He in Heaven has fixed His Throne, He'll fix His members there."

Two or three practical sentences. One word is this—this, "with the Lord" must begin now. Do you wish to be forever with the Lord? You must be with Him by becoming His disciple in this life. None come to be with the Lord hereafter who are not with the Lord here in time. See to it, dear Hearers, see to it, lest this unspeakable privilege should never be yours. Next, every Christian should seek to be more and more with Christ, for the growth and glory of your life lies there. Do you want to have Heaven below? Be with Christ below! Do you want to know, at once, what eternal bliss is? Know it by living with the Lord now.

The next word is, how plainly, then, the way of life is to be with the Lord. If you want to be saved, Sinner, you must be "with the Lord." There is no other way! Come near to Him and lay hold upon Him by faith. Life lies there. Come to Him by a humble, tearful faith. Come at once! And, lastly, what must it be to be without the Lord? What must it be to be against the Lord? For it comes to that, "He that is not with Me," He says, "is against Me"—to be forever without the Lord, banished from His love, light, life, peace, rest and joy! What a loss this will be!

What must it be to be forever against the Lord! Think of it—forever hating Jesus, forever plotting against Him, forever gnashing your teeth against Him—this is Hell, this is time infinite of misery, to be against the Lord of Love and Life and Light. Turn from this fatal course! Believe on Him—"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Amen.

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