

THROUGH THE GATES

WHAT THE BRIGHT, UNDIMMED EYE
OF FAITH CAN SEE OF HEAVEN.

NO FIGHT FOR AN EXISTENCE.

Consequently There Is No Need of Rest
There-Perfect Renewal of Our Powers
Day by Day That the Passage of Years
Leaves No Trace of Decay, Faith the
Preacher.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Can-
ada, in the year 1903, by William S. Galt, of To-
ronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Chicago, Aug. 23.—From the glitter and fascination of worldly pleasures and enjoyments the preacher in this sermon directs us to the contemplation of the greater joys of the "better land." The text is I Cor.inthians xv, 49, "We shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

What is heaven? Some people think that we do not know much about it. I remember how my father who loved to preach about the "celestial city," used to say he felt when he described it—that he was looking through a glass darkly.

That is true. No human mind can conceive, no human voice or pen can depict, the beauties of the celestial kingdom. There are, however, passages in God's word which open the pearly gates a little way, so that we can catch a glimpse of the supernatural grandeur of that city of celestial glory.

We can, as it were, pluck a rose of Sharon or a lily of the valley and learn in miniature what the fragrance of the heavenly gardens shall be, where every hillside and meadow-land is covered with perpetual flora.

Through the crevices of that open gate we can, as it were, for a moment catch a sight of the redeemed, whose garments are as white as the driven snow and whose joys are limited only by their own capacity to enjoy the happiness provided for them by their almighty and all loving Father. It is for such a glimpse of this heaven, to which all Christians are heading, that I would open my Bible to-day and speak from the text, "As we have borne the image of the earth we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Heaven is the place of immortal residence. What does that imply? "Why," answers some one, "that means that we shall live on millions upon millions of years." It means that long after this earth as a burning star shall flicker and go out our spiritual existence shall continue. It means a conscious life extending to ages which dwarf into brevity the longest term even of the inanimate relics of the most remote past.

But the immortality of heaven is not to be measured in years alone. It is the immortality of eternal youth. Old age implies weakness of body and of mind. In heaven there will be such a perfect renewal of our powers day by day that the passage of years leaves no trace of decay.

Perfect adjustment of the resurrected body to its celestial surroundings proves there is to be no fight for an immortal existence. Why does the physical body grow tired? Because it is not in perfect accord with its physical surroundings. In order to make the heart pump I must breathe. Yet every time I inhale the air that oxygen burns up part of my physical being, which must be replaced by food and physical nourishment. Why do the great clouds of smoke ascend from the funnels of the locomotive and the chimneys of the factories? Because those clouds form component parts of wasted energies. Imperfect consumption of fuel implies that the coal must be continually shovelled into the furnace or else the machinery will stop. But in that heavenly land there shall be no need of sleep, because the redeemed body, perfectly adjusted to its celestial surroundings, will never know fatigue. There shall be no need of physicians, because pain, which is the warning signal of infirmity, shall never have any of our joints in its twist. There shall be no need of recreation, because then all stings shall be once

We marvel at the perfect adjustment in the natural world. We wonder at the vast resources of power which can swing the stars in their courses and make whirling constellations marshal themselves upon the heavenly plains and yet have no confusion in passing reviews. Once in awhile we are horror struck when some of the elements seem to balk and the lightnings, as fractious colts, kick over the traces and start to smash things. We stand aghast when the dark garments of a tornado sweep past us, or two storm clouds collide and the heavens are ablaze with electricity and the ear is startled with the crashing of the thunder and the freshets come and bridges are swept away. But all the time when these elements are at war we think of the greater power which holds the moon and the sun off from the earth at arm's length. We think of the greater power of the laws of evaporation, which with golden pulleys lift those waters into the clouds. We think of the law of cohesion or of specific gravity, which holds this old earth together in a compact sphere. We think of the power inherent in vegetable and animal life of sucking up the waters which flow by their sides. We marvel at the great adjustment of nature—marvel not only because it works like the wheels of a perfect automaton, but because it seems to work without friction.

Now, my friends, if we wonder at the seemingly perfect adjustment of the mundane elements, can we not the more marvel at the perfect adjustment of the redeemed body with its heavenly surroundings? Shall we not rejoice over the thought that all our faculties shall be enlarged and our opened and yet keep on enlarging and developing and never grow tired? We have read that for over fifty years John Wesley preached on an average sixteen sermons per week, or nearly three sermons per day. How vigorous must have been the constitution that could perform that task!

But in heaven we shall all have vigorous constitutions. Oh, the rapture of that better land in which the services we render will never produce weariness nor the infinite subjects that will engage our attention ever cause satiety! Our hearts grow weary, even though they may be busy in well doing. But in that "beautiful land" we shall never be weary of well doing. Then our redeemed bodies shall have a perfect eye, a perfect ear, a perfect tongue, a perfect foot, a perfect hand clasp. Then all our faculties shall not only have the resilience of youth, but the alertness and perfect adjustment of immortality. We shall live and continue to live, because decay and corruption shall flee away when "death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed."

Heaven is to be a place of progressive enjoyments. If the resurrected brain is to be alert it must have something to feed upon. Though there may be many intellectual enjoyments of heaven, I believe these joys must be two which will most appeal to the denizens of the skies. The first is in studying the wonderful construction of the celestial city. "Oh," answers some one, "I know now what is the formation of heaven. It is a great walled town. And the length and breadth and the height of it are all equal. And the wall is made of pure gold, and the foundations of the walls of the city are a collection of precious stones, and the twelve gates of the city are twelve massive pearls. Why, the book of Revelation describes the city to its minutest detail."

Do you truly mean what you say? Do you affirm that the streets of heaven are to be literally made out of yellow bricks and the city to be a walled in town with a lot of precious stones for foundations? Why, the apostle in the book of Revelation is merely talking in figurative language or in the language of earth. He is giving us a description of heaven in figures which we can comprehend. He does not mean that heaven is to have streets of gold any more than he literally means that hell is to be a place of fire. Fire is a symbol of torture, cold and precious stones are the symbols of unlimited luxur-

ies. Thus the apostle piles together a great mass of diamonds and sapphires and emeralds and topazes and anasthysts and says: "Heaven is to be like that. Heaven is to be like pearls, like mansions of white, like golden boulevards. Picture to yourself the brightest place you possibly can, and heaven is to be multipotently, infinitely, transcendently more beautiful." Yet when at last we reach heaven all will be so new, so strange, that our minds through all eternity will never tire of exploring the grandeur. We shall take wings of the morning and fly away as a bird, and every place our eye lights upon shall offer inexhaustible fields of investigation.

Now, the more you live with some people the more you appreciate their love and devotion and realize their true worth. When you were a little child you thought you loved your mother, but every year you grew older the more beauty and tenderness you found in her life. When she was old and her hair silvered and face wrinkled and her work was done and she thought that her work was done and get her. But she became dearer to you then every day. You said to her just before her death: "Mother, mother, I cannot get along without you. I am just now beginning to appreciate what your love means." Yes, forty-aye, fifty-aye, fully appreciate the beautiful characters of those who have lived by our side. Each month reveals some new sweetness or gentleness, each year some new worth. So our heavenly surprises. We shall all be hourly and daily discovering some new manifestation of purity and love in the lives of those with whom we are spending eternity. We shall be continually surprised with their thoughtfulness and sacrifices and tender attentions. When they do us the unexpected kindnesses which only heaven can offer we shall delightedly exclaim, "Why, Mary, though I have been living with you now in heaven for a thousand years I never realized before how thoroughly kind you could be. Their spiritual beauties, their noble deeds, their self sacrificing attentions, shall be as a changing kaleidoscope, ever revealing to us new nature and wonderfully new developments of love."

Heaven is to be a place of manifested gratitude, a place where we can lay at the feet of our benefactors the rich golden sheaves of our lives which came as a result of their seed planting. It shall be a place where others may rejoice in our gospel conquests because their words of advice and their prayers and their examples were the means of first leading us to the foot of the cross and starting us forth as gospel messengers.

Heaven must be such a place. Why? Because most Christians never live long enough on earth to see the full results of their services for the Master. But few gospel workers can say, as did Simon of old, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people." We shall not live long enough to see our boys and girls, for whom we have slaved and worked and prayed, grow up into Christian men and women and see them as teachers in Christian Sunday schools and leaders in evangelistic meetings and perhaps elders and ministers about the communion table of the Lord's supper. But in heaven we shall know about the glorious results of our Christian labors. In heaven the redeemed mother shall not only see her children, but her children's children, who have been saved through her prayers and consecration. In heaven there shall be rejoicing everywhere, because we shall there know that through the results of our labors the "dead are alive again and the lost are found."

And, oh, how many redeemed immortals we shall have to thank in that heavenly kingdom! John Todd, you were dead thirty years before I was born, but I shall in heaven thank thee for the yellow leaves of that old book I found in my father's library of which you were the author. That book was one of the means used by the Holy Spirit of turning my thoughts toward the Christian ministry. William H. Milburn, twenty years blind chaplain of the United States senate, thou didst not, in all probability, ever hear of my name. With thy sightless eyes thou didst make me turn many a grateful glance toward the Christ who in heaven is today watching thy rapturous and holy face. I wish to thank thee, O redeemed spirit, thou who years ago as a Sunday school teacher in the old Brooklyn tabernacle didst shed many an anxious tear over thy scholars. I would tell thee that to-day in the sacred ministry I feel the touch of thy sacred hand and hear the earnest tone of thy pleading voice. Yes, there are many spirits in heaven we would thank for what they did for us when upon the earth. We would thank them that they may rejoice, as we all rejoice, and that their hosannas of gratitude might be augmented with our halleluiahs.

As Christian comrades one will say: "Do you remember that time when we started those cottage prayer meetings? As a result of these prayer meetings what a glorious revival we had—a hundred and twenty souls for Christ!" "Yes," says another, "that reminds me of what a hard time we had in starting that mission school down in the alums. Cycles said it would do no good, but it did, it did." "Yes," will answer many voices, "we were converted and saved through these little meetings." Then the pastors and the different congregations will get together, and they will have their reminiscences. And the parents and the children will get together, and they will talk over again the blessings which came from their altars. And the Bible distributors will tell how they were scoffed at and yet blessed as they distributed their tracts and sacred leaves. And Francis E. Clark and the Christian Halleluists will have their re-

arate reunions. We shall be in that "better land" living over and over again the Christian joys which we passed through when serving Christ upon the earth. Oh, my friends, if this idea is true, that heaven is to be a place of glorious reminiscences, ought we not all to double and triple our energies in the service of Jesus Christ? Shall we not by the power of the Holy Spirit do more and more for our Saviour, who has done so much for us, in order to be able to drink deep out of this golden chalice of celestial pleasure?

But the greatest celestial joy of all I have reserved until the last. Heaven is to be a place of perpetual worship. "Does that mean," asks some one, "heaven is to be a great cathedral or church in which all the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem shall assemble and pray to him—and pray to him and never cease to pray to him?" In which there shall be a service with no doxology and no benediction, for that service shall be without beginning and without end?" Oh, no, my brother. I do not believe you have caught the right idea of the worship of the celestial city. Heaven is not to be a church, where we shall have stated times for prayers and hymns. St. John distinctly says in his Apocalypse: "And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb and the temple are of it." That means, as I take it, instead of having buildings especially dedicated for the worship of the deity we shall feel, wherever we may be, that we are standing face to face with Christ. And then our hearts shall be so full of gratitude to him for what he has done for us that our eyes and lips and tongues and hearts will never cease to praise him. It will not be the worship of intercession or of pleading for the pardon of sin, but the worship of adoration and of eternal homage.

Perhaps my thought may be simply illustrated by a conversation I had with a very dear friend some time ago. This noble Christian man turned to me one day and said: "Do you know that my ideas of prayer and worship have greatly changed within the last few years? When I used to pray I would make out a long list of petitions for which I would ask God. But now I have begun to see that he loves me better than I love myself. Therefore, instead of saying, 'O God, give me this or that,' I simply say, 'O Christ, thou art so good and pure; suit thyself in reference to my life and thou wilt suit me. They will, O Lord, and not mine, be done.' So in that heavenly land we shall have but one prayer and one song, 'They will, O Lord, not mine, be done.' We shall sing it on the street. We shall sing it in the green pastures beside the still waters. We shall sing it in chorus with our loved ones. We shall sing it when we are alone. 'Thy will, O God, thy will be done.' In that one song, and that alone, we shall find the perpetual and never ending worship of heaven."

Thus, my dear Christian friends I have tried to open for you a little way the gates of the glorious "city of the redeemed." I have tried to eternally bind our lives with the immortal lives of our dead. Like Christian in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," may you continue to strive to enter into the "strait gate." And like the Christian Queen Victoria may you hopefully and triumphantly be able to write the same kind of an epitaph upon the tombstones of your loved ones as she chieled upon the mausoleum of the departed prince consort: "Farewell, beloved. Here at last I will rest with thee. With thee in Christ shall I rise again." Such is the scope and prophecy for all who love him. Heaven! Heaven! Glorious heaven! Heaven of the Christians who are resurrected! Heaven, eternal and never ending heaven!

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