

THE HEAVENLY TREASURE.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is there will your heart be also." – Matt. 6:19-21.

ATREASURE is something in which we take special pleasure and delight. It is in our thoughts and plans and hopes, an inspiration in our lives, and an incentive to energy, perseverance and endurance for the hope which it enkindles. There are few people in the world who have no treasures; yet they are generally such as yield but little satisfaction, being earthly and therefore perishable. Some find their treasures in wealth, fame, social distinction, houses and lands, friends, home, family, etc., and in these they center their hopes. But all of these are subject to change and decay, and may, if the heart be centered in them, at any moment desolate the life, plunging the heart at once into an abyss of sorrow which can only be measured by the former high tide of its joy when life was young and hope new, before the shadows of disappointment crossed the way.

The wealth, laboriously gathered and husbanded with much care, may vanish in an hour; the fame, so dearly won, may change to censure at the caprice of fickle public sentiment; the social distinction, which once bade you to the uppermost seat, may by and by relegate you to the lowest seat, as one despised and forsaken; houses and lands may disappear under the sheriff's hammer; friends long trusted may suddenly turn the cold shoulder and prove untrue or even treacherous; the home you love must soon or later break up; the family will be scattered, or death will invade it, or even the love that glowed on the home-altar may flicker and become uncertain or extinct. So the high hopes of early life, centered in the earthly treasures, may in a few short years turn to ashes. How many have found it so! the moth of wear and

the rust of time corrupt the fair earthly blessings; and thieves break through and steal the treasures of our possessions and our hearts, and desolation and gloom are the painful results. But it is not so with those whose treasure is laid up in heaven.

The all-important question then is, How can we lay up treasure in heaven, and what kind of treasures are accepted in that sure and safe depository?

We have the assurance of the divine Word that every thing that is pure and holy and good is acceptable there. The chiefest of all treasures there is the personal friendship and love of Christ, "the fairest among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely." If we have gained this treasure we have gained one that never changes, one whose love never grows cold and from which nothing can separate us – "neither tribulation, nor distress, nor famine, nor persecution, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword;" for his love and friendship are not like those of this world, which forsake us in the hour of need. Neither can "death," which often consigns to forgetfulness the friendships of this life; "nor angels," even with all the superior charms of their purity and glory; nor the "principalities and powers" of darkness that are arrayed against us to separate the betrothed virgin of Christ from her beloved Bridegroom; nor any of the "things present or to come;" "neither height" of temporary exaltation, nor "depth" of trouble and sorrow, "nor any other creature [thing]" in heaven or earth, separate from his special love the Lord's elect, who have found in him their chief treasure. – Cant. 5:10,16.

Nor will any other creature in heaven or in earth receive from him those marks of special favor which are, and ever will be, the chief joy of his beloved bride. Though "the whole family of God in heaven and in earth" will be blessed through him, his wife co-operating with him in the work, she alone will be *his companion, his confidant, his treasure*. This close relationship of the Church to Christ was set forth in the Lord's words to his typical people (Deut. 14:2), which the

Apostle Peter (1 Pet. 2:9) shows belonged, not to them, but to their antitypes, the elect Church. To them he said, "For thou art an holy [R1820 : page 133] people unto the Lord thy God, and *the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself*, above all the nations that are upon the earth." And the Apostle, after showing that the typical people of God stumbled and proved themselves unworthy of such special favor, applies the promise to the Gospel Church, saying, But *ye* are the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which *in time past were not the people, but are now the people of God*. – 1 Pet. 2:9.

And to us God has made exceeding great and precious promises – promises, not only of redemption and deliverance from sin and death, and recognition as sons and heirs of God through Christ to the inheritance of eternal life, but more: he has called us by his grace to be the bride of his only Son and heir – the "heir of all things;" to be his intimate and eternal companion in all things; to be "*joint-heirs*" with him of all his possessions, so that "all things are ours" also, "if we are Christ's;" to be "partakers," too, of the "divine nature" and glory and kingdom; even to sit with him in his throne, and with him to constitute a "royal priesthood" in whom all the world shall be blessed.

Hear the invitation (Psa. 45:10,11), "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house [the world and its ambitions, hopes and aims]; so shall the King [Jehovah's Anointed] greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him." What wonder is it if, when we receive such a message, we hesitate and feel that we are unworthy; that in our imperfection there can be no beauty in us that he should desire us, passing by even the angels in their purity and glory. Surely there must be some mistake! has not the invitation come like the vision of a dream to be dispelled when sound judgment has awakened to realities? Ah, no! hearken again, and be reassured of the voice of Jehovah, our God; for long ago he led his inspired prophet to pen these lines for us, and

now by his spirit he unseals our understanding and brings the matter to us with all the freshness of his own personality. But what "beauty" have I? I know that I have not all the graces of the spirit in their glory and perfection; but then, as I reflect, I realize that I wear the robe of Christ's righteousness; then have I not "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit?" and have I not that faith wherewith it is possible to please God? Therefore I lay hold, with exceeding joy and gratitude, of even this gracious invitation, and, without presumption, I accept the blessed hope and press toward the mark of my high calling which is of God in Christ Jesus, humbly trusting that he who has begun the good work of grace in me will perfect it against that day when he would have me appear before him "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

No sooner is the gracious invitation thus accepted than the pleasure of the Lord is expressed to the prospective bride. Hear – Ye "shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels." "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." "I will give thee to eat of the hidden manna" [John 4:32], and will give thee a white stone [a precious token of love], and in the stone a new name written [the name of the Bridegroom, henceforth to be ours – Acts 15:14], which no man knoweth [1 Cor. 2:14] saving he that receiveth it." "Lo, I am with you alway [in thought and loving oversight and care], even unto the end of the age." "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is expedient *for you* that [personally] I go away to him that sent me: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that *where I am, there ye may be also*. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and **[R1821 : page 133]** he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the spirit of truth whom the world can not receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him: we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." – Mal. 3:17; Isa. 33:17; Rev. 2:17; Matt. 28:20; John 16:7,5; 14:2,3,15-18,21-23.

Hear again, as the Lord lifts up his voice in prayer to his Father, and our Father, to his God and our God (John 20:17), "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. I pray for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." – John 17:24,9,10.

Precious words! con them over again and again, beloved of the Lord, that all their sweetness may permeate your souls and reinforce your waning powers with new vigor, courage and zeal to press along the narrow way until your eyes shall "see the King in his beauty."

Other treasures which we may lay up in heaven are those marks of just approval and distinction among all the good and holy which must result from zeal and faithfulness to the Lord and patient endurance of tribulation in his service in the present life. While an exceeding and eternal weight of glory is to be the inheritance of all of the elect body of Christ who are now laying up treasure in heaven, the Apostle Paul clearly intimates that that treasure may be augmented by special zeal and faithfulness under the peculiar trials of the present time. (2 Cor. 4:17,18.) Treasures also of mind and character we shall find laid up in heaven; for nothing that is good and true, and worthy of preservation, shall be lost to those who have committed their investments to the Lord's keeping. These are incorruptible treasures which neither the lapse of time nor the exigencies of circumstance will be permitted to wrest from us. The treasures in heaven will also include all those true and noble friendships founded in righteousness and truth here on earth, whether they be on the natural or the spiritual **[R1821 : page 134]** plane. For instance, one on the spiritual plane of being will not be disposed to forget or to ignore the loving loyalty of a former earthly friendship which often ministered a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul in time of need. Surely some special marks of favor from the highly exalted ones will manifest the appreciation of the old-time friendships (Matt. 10:41,42; Heb. 6:10), and the reciprocation of such grateful loving hearts will be a part of the treasure long laid up in heaven, then

to be realized. Nor will the special friendships of those on the spiritual plane, begun and cherished here and now, lose any of their value and sweetness when mortality is swallowed up of life.

Oh, how precious will be the heavenly treasures when we view them in the light of the new dispensation – as glorious realities uncorrupted and incorruptible! With what joy shall the faithful begin to realize them when first they hear the Master's welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord." Then will follow the welcome of all the glorified fellow-members of the anointed body; and if the jubilant songs of the angels hailed the advent of our Lord in the flesh, can we imagine them to be silent when the anointed "body" is received into glory, their work in the flesh having been finished? Surely not: if "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," the glad notes of jubilee will be raised very high when the Church shall have finished her course and entered into her reward. And as the tidings spread to earth, through the established earthly phase of the Kingdom, all creatures in heaven and in earth will be rejoicing together. – Rev. 5:11-13.

Who indeed can estimate the value of the heavenly treasures? Their value is past our present powers of reckoning; yet, with an approximate appreciation of them, let us keep our eye upon them and diligently lay up in heaven many of them, assured that there moth and rust can not corrupt, nor thieves break through nor steal. Let our hearts glory in the heavenly treasures, esteeming all things else as of minor importance. If our hearts are set upon the heavenly treasures only, then indeed the disappointment and trials of the present life cannot overwhelm us, though they may cause us pain and sorrow. The heavenly treasures include all that is pure and good and noble and true. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are worthy of the aspirations of the spiritual sons of God, these are our real treasures; and let our hearts glory in them more and more.

"Let us touch lightly the things of this earth,
Esteeming them only of trifling worth,"

and let our treasures be laid up in heaven and our hearts dwell there.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE HEAVENLY TREASURES UPON THE PRESENT LIFE.

In this view of the heavenly treasures we can see what a marked influence such a hope and ambition must have on the present life. (1) It helps us to realize that the Lord, whose present and final commendation we so earnestly desire, is taking special notice of even the most trivial affairs of our daily life and of our conduct with reference to them, as well as when we pass through the great billows of temptation and trial that seem disposed at times to overwhelm us. (2) It helps us to realize that the future approval of even our present enemies is a treasure worth the seeking. By and by the present opponent may be converted from the error of his way, and when he shall look back and call to mind the patient endurance, faithfulness and uniform kindness of the man formerly despised, hated, reviled and persecuted, the persecuting spirit may turn to mourning and repentance, and the former hatred, to love and admiration. This the Apostle intimates, saying, "Beloved... have your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Pet. 2:12.) And this love, the reward of righteousness, will be a part of the treasure of the future. Even so we are told the nation of Israel will by and by look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn because of him. (Zech. 12:10.) This blessed satisfaction will be part of the Lord's treasure which, at his first advent, he laboriously laid up in heaven's keeping. It was the prospect of this treasure that assisted him to so patiently endure mocking, ignominy, scorn, ingratitude, pain and death. Under all his sufferings he did not grow discouraged nor faint, but confidently looked to the joy of the future set before him – the joy of a renewed, grateful and loving race. So also our heavenly Father has

for six thousand years patiently borne with the ingratitude and wickedness of men, sending his rain and sunshine upon the just and the unjust, and at great cost providing for their redemption and restitution which by and by will reveal to him also the treasure of grateful hearts which shall to all eternity ascribe to him the praise of their salvation. Similar will be the joy of all the faithful sons of God who likewise now lay up treasure in heaven.

Just as we now look back in loving remembrance upon the worthy character and noble example of a sainted father or a tender mother with a degree of appreciation which childhood could not realize, so will men by and by learn to appreciate every worthy character; and so every good and noble deed will eventually receive its due reward.
