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The Enjoyment of God Forever: John Flavel’s View of the Redemptive Blessings of Union with Christ

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Introduction

John Flavel¹ defines union with Christ as “an intimate conjunction of believers to Christ, by the imparting of his Spirit to them whereby they are enabled to believe and live in him.”² According to Flavel, the Bible employs three “lively metaphors” to explain the nature of this union.³

¹ John Flavel (1627–1691), a graduate of Oxford University, ministered at Dartmouth, until his ejection from the Church of England for nonconformity in 1662.

² John Flavel, *The Works of John Flavel: Vol. I–VI* (London: W. Baynes and Son, 1820; rpt., London: Banner of Truth, 1968), II:37. All quotations are taken from this edition.

³ II:34, 143.

The first is that of graft and stock, as found in Romans 6:5, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Flavel believes that the term “planted” conveys the idea of a graft being implanted into a stock. When this happens, the stock’s sap or juice immediately passes to the graft. Consequently, the graft receives its vitality from the stock.⁴ This “conjunction is so close,” says Flavel, “that they become one tree.”⁵ In the same way, believers are implanted into Christ. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit whose “work in uniting or engrafting a soul in Christ, is like the cutting off the graft from its native stock... and closing it with the living, when it is thus prepared, and so enabling it... to suck and draw the vital sap.”⁶ As a result, believers receive life from Christ. Plus, they are conjoined with him. Flavel remarks, “As the vital sap of the stock coming into the graft, makes it one of the stock... so the coming of Christ’s Spirit into the soul, makes it a member of his mystical body.”⁷

The second metaphor is that of head and body, as found in Ephesians 4:15–16, “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” According to Flavel, believers stand to Christ in the same relation as the members of a physical body stand to their head, and Christ stands to believers in the same relation as the head of a physical body stands to its members. Just as the head gives sense and motion to its physical body, Christ gives sense and motion to his mystical body. Flavel states, “As all the members of the natural body receive animation, sense, and motion, by their union with their natural head; so all believers, the members of Christ, receive spiritual life and animation by their union with Christ their mystical head (Eph. 4:15–16).”⁸

⁴ II:144.

⁵ V:147.

⁶ II:38.

⁷ IV:212.

⁸ II:426.

The third metaphor is that of husband and wife, as found in Ephesians 5:30–31, “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”⁹ Here, Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 to demonstrate that the union between Adam and Eve typifies the union between Christ and the church. (1) As Eve is taken out of Adam, so too the church is taken out of Christ. When Christ died, the soldier pierced his side with a spear. Water and blood flowed from that wound: the purchasing price for the church. The church is, therefore, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones. (2) As Eve is brought to Adam, so too the church is brought to Christ. They are joined together, becoming one flesh—one body. (3) As Eve completes Adam, so too the church completes Christ. This does not mean that Christ is *lacking* in anything. As the eternal Son of God, he is perfect and complete. It does mean that, in his “mediatorship,” he is incomplete without his people. As Paul expresses it, the church is “his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:23).

Each of the above metaphors stresses the fact that there is an intimate and indissoluble union between Christ and his people. By virtue of this union, believers participate in Christ’s spiritual privileges: his names, titles, righteousness, holiness, death, resurrection, and glory.¹⁰ “Thy union with his person,” says Flavel, “brings interest in his properties along with it. Whatever he is, or hath, it is for thee.”¹¹ For Flavel, one of the clearest descriptions of these “properties” is found in 1 Corinthians 1:30, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

First, Christ is made unto us wisdom. According to Flavel, this is true in two ways.¹² (1) Christ improves “those treasures of wisdom that are in himself, for the benefit of such souls as are united to him.” (2) Christ imparts “his wisdom to them by the Spirit of illumination.”

⁹ I:450, II:35, IV:212.

¹⁰ II:145–148.

¹¹ VI:80.

¹² II:16.

We need a prophet to reveal God to us. We also need a prophet to dispel the darkness that pervades our minds. As the God-man, Christ is that prophet. When we become one with him mystically, we partake of the benefits of his prophetic office. Simply put, he imparts the knowledge of God to us, and enables us to receive it.

Second, Christ is made unto us righteousness. This, according to Flavel, is a reference to justification.¹³ (1) It includes the pardon of sin. When God justifies us, he charges our sin to Christ.¹⁴ Christ died as our substitute, bearing the curse of the law. Because our sin is charged to Christ, God forgives us. (2) It includes the acceptance of our persons as righteous. When God justifies us, he credits Christ's righteousness to us. Christ lived as our substitute, fulfilling the requirements of the law. Because Christ's righteousness is credited to us, God declares us to be righteous. As Flavel states, "Christ is made of God unto us *righteousness*, complete and perfect righteousness, whereby our obligation to punishment is dissolved, and thereby a solid foundation for a well-settled peace of conscience firmly established."¹⁵

We need a priest to mediate between God and us by removing our condemnation and giving us what we lack: righteousness. As the God-man, Christ is that priest. When we become one with him mystically, we partake of the benefits of his priestly office. What is ours becomes his; God reckons our sin to Christ. What is his becomes ours; God reckons Christ's righteousness to us.

Third, Christ is made unto us sanctification. For Flavel, this means that Christ relieves "us against the dominion and pollutions of our corruptions."¹⁶ Paul affirms, in Romans 6:6, that our old man is crucified with Christ. The purpose of this crucifixion is that "the body of sin might be destroyed." Paul develops the consequences of this, asking, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"¹⁷ According to this verse, there are two masters: sin, resulting in death; and righteousness, resulting in

¹³ VI:196–197.

¹⁴ 2 Cor. 5:21.

¹⁵ II:16. His italics.

¹⁶ II:17.

¹⁷ Rom. 6:16.

life.¹⁸ The first master rules over those in Adam, whereas the second rules over those in Christ. Believers are united with Christ and, therefore, no longer in Adam. This union means that they are freed from sin and enslaved to righteousness.

We need a king to break the power of sin over us. As the God-man, Christ is that king. He is stronger than the “strong man” that binds us.¹⁹ He is invested with all power and authority in heaven and on earth. When we become one with him mystically, we partake of the benefits of his kingly office. He subdues our will, bringing it into line with God’s will.

Fourth, Christ is made unto us redemption. Wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification are tremendous privileges, nevertheless, says Flavel, “Something is required beyond all this to make our happiness perfect and entire wanting nothing; and that is the removal of those doleful effects and consequences of sin, which... still lie upon the souls and bodies of illuminated, justified, and sanctified persons.”²⁰ By “doleful effects and consequences of sin,” he means those “swarms of vanity, loads of deadness, and fits of unbelief” that assail the soul, plus those “many diseases, deformities, and pains” that oppress the body. But Christ has become to us redemption. Flavel believes that the term “redemption” refers to glorification: the “hope of the glory of God.”²¹ Elsewhere, Paul writes, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”²² According to Flavel, this transformation (glorification) will mark our release from seven chains. (1) We will be free from “defiling corruptions.”²³ The guilt of sin is pardoned by justification and the power of sin is broken by sanctification, but the presence of sin is only removed at glorification. At that time, the lusts of the flesh and mind will be gone. We will enter a state of “perfect purity.” (2) We

18 Rom. 6:13–20.

19 Luke 11:21–22.

20 II:17.

21 Rom. 5:2.

22 Phil. 3:20–21. Also see Col. 3:4.

23 III:113.

will be free from “sinking sorrows.”²⁴ At present, because of affliction, we cry with Naomi: “Call me not Naomi [*pleasant*], call me Mara [*bitter*].”²⁵ But the day is coming when we will be free from all suffering. We will enter a state of “fullness of joy.” (3) We will be free from “entangling temptations.”²⁶ The devil is relentless in his assault “against our souls.” However, in the future, “he can no more touch or affect the soul with any temptation, than we can better the body of the sun with snow-balls.” We will enter a state of “everlasting freedom.” (4) We will be free from “distressing persecutions.”²⁷ “We must spend our days,” says Flavel, “under the oppression of the wicked; yet this is our comfort, we know when we shall be far enough out of their reach.” At that time, we will enter a state of “full and perfect rest.” (5) We will be free from “pinching wants.”²⁸ We have temporal wants. More importantly, we have spiritual wants. We lack faith, joy, peace, love, and zeal. Plus, we struggle in spiritual duties. These deficiencies plague us. At glorification, however, every want will be supplied. We will enter a state of “universal supplies.” (6) We will be free from “distracting fears.”²⁹ Flavel classifies these fears according to “body” and “soul.” In that day, “no wind of fear shall ever ruffle or disturb their souls, and put them into a storm any more.” We will enter a state of “highest security and rest.” (7) We will be free from “deluding shadows.”³⁰ These are the deceitful vanities of the world. “Vanity of Vanities, saith the preacher; All is vanity.”³¹ These deluding shadows tempt believers at present. One day, however, they will be but a shadow of a memory. And we will enter a state of “substantial good.”

For Flavel, these redemptive blessings (illumination, justification, sanctification, and redemption)—flowing from union with Christ—are great. However, they themselves are but a means to an end: the greatest of redemptive blessing of all—communion with God.

24 III:114.

25 Ruth 1:20.

26 III:114.

27 III:115.

28 III:115.

29 III:116.

30 III:117.

31 Eccl. 12:8.

Present Communion

Christ declares, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”³² In this verse, Flavel sees union between Christ and the believer: “I will come in to him, and will sup with him.” He also sees communion between the believer and Christ: “and he with me.” Flavel believes that the nature of this communion is “found to lie in a spiritual correspondency betwixt Christ and the soul. God lets forth influences upon our souls, and we, by the assistance of his Spirit, make returns again unto God.”³³ This definition raises an obvious question: When does God let forth his “influences” upon our souls (i.e., communicate himself to us), so that we make “returns” to him? Flavel identifies three instances, in which such communion takes place.

First, there is communion with God “*in the contemplation of the divine attributes*, and the impressions God makes by them upon our souls, whilst we meditate on them.”³⁴ Flavel provides six examples.³⁵ (1) God impresses his “immense greatness” upon us, thereby making “an awful, humbling impression upon the soul.” “When I consider,” says Flavel, “what a great God the Creator of the world is, I am justly astonished that ever he should set his heart upon so vile a thing as man.” (2) God impresses his “purity and holiness” upon us, thereby producing “shame and deep abasement in the soul.” Flavel appeals to the examples of Isaiah and Job, who were both overwhelmed by God’s holiness and, as a result, acutely aware of their own sinfulness.³⁶ (3) God impresses his “goodness and mercy” upon us, thereby working “an ingenuous thaw and melting of the heart.” His goodness is evident in “external providences” and “spiritual mercies.” (4) God impresses his “veracity and faithfulness” upon us, thereby begetting “trust and holy confidence.” His faithfulness is seen in his Word and providence. (5) God impresses his “anger and displeasure” upon us, thereby resulting in repentance. “Shame and blushing,” says Flavel, “are as excellent signs of communion with God as the

32 Rev. 3:20.

33 IV:240.

34 IV:240. His italics.

35 IV:240–243.

36 See Isa. 6:3–5; Job 40:4–5.

sweetest smiles.” (6) God impresses his “omniscience” upon us, thereby producing sincerity. Turning to the example of David, Flavel observes, “The consideration that he was always before the eye of God was his preservative from iniquity, yea, from his own iniquity.”

Second, there is communion with God “in the exercises of our graces in the various duties of religion; in praying, hearing, sacraments, &c. in all which the Spirit of the Lord influences the graces of his people, and they return the fruits thereof in some measure to him. As God hath planted various graces in regenerate souls, so he hath appointed various duties to exercise and draw forth those graces; and when they do so, then have his people sweet actual communion with him.”³⁷ What does Flavel mean by “graces?” (1) There is the grace of repentance: “The soul pours out itself before the Lord with much bitterness and brokenness of heart.” (2) There is the grace of faith: “They find from the Lord inward support, rest, and refreshment.” (3) There is the grace of love: “The strength of the soul is drawn forth to Christ in love, and this the Lord repays in kind, love for love.” (4) There is the grace of passive obedience: “Christians are enabled to exercise their patience, meekness, and longsuffering for Christ, in return to which, the Lord gives them the singular consolations of his Spirit, double returns of joy.”³⁸

Third, there is communion with God “in the way of his providences.”³⁹ As Flavel explains, “The Lord chastens his children... in answer whereunto gracious souls return meek and child-like submission, a fruit of the Spirit of adoption... When this produces trust in God, and resignation to the pleasure of his will, here is communion with God in times of distress and difficulty.”⁴⁰

In each of the above instances, God communicates himself to our souls, so that we make “returns” to him. These returns include the stirring of the affections: love, desire, delight, fear, sorrow, trust, and hope. For Flavel, these affections “are the strong and sensible motions” of the soul by which it is “capable of union with the highest

37 IV:244.

38 IV:244–245.

39 IV:245.

40 IV:245.

good.” When these affections are directed toward God, the soul rests in him as its center.⁴¹ And this is communion with God.

Flavel turns to Song of Solomon, for language to express these “returns unto God.” In typical Puritan fashion, he interprets this book as a spiritual allegory, depicting the relationship between Christ and the church.⁴² It is, he says, “a spiritual *epithalamium*, sung in parts betwixt the heavenly bridegroom and the bride. The matter of it is most spiritual and weighty, the stile of it rapturous and lofty, the intimate union and communion of Christ and the church.”⁴³ In it, the bride (church) expresses her “conjugal affections” for the bridegroom (Christ)—the principal affections being desire and delight.

The Church’s Desire for Christ

In terms of the church’s desire for Christ, Flavel turns to Song of Solomon 3:1–5. These verses depict the “value of the divine presence with the soul,”⁴⁴ in that the bridegroom has departed, but the bride is not content to let him go. Therefore, she searches for him. Flavel maintains that believers are likewise “sensible of God’s recesses, and withdrawment from their spirits; they feel how the ebb follows the flood, and how the waters abate.”⁴⁵ When they perceive his absence, they immediately set about searching for him: “God goes off from your souls, but you cannot go off from him. No, your hearts are mourning after the Lord, seeking him carefully with tears: complaining of his absence, as the greatest evil in this world.”⁴⁶ Because of her longing, the bride enters the streets to search for her beloved. Finally, she finds him. In a similar fashion, believers desire Christ in his absence and, therefore, seek after him. Having found him, they lay hold of him by faith.

⁴¹ II:524. Also see II:510.

⁴² VI:450. Allegorical interpretation among the Puritans is the subject of some controversy. See Paul Jewett, “Concerning the Allegorical Interpretation of Scripture,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 17 (1954): 1–20.

⁴³ VI:547.

⁴⁴ I:411, 415. This desire is also depicted in Song 5:2–8. See II:366, VI:389.

⁴⁵ VI:389.

⁴⁶ I:415.

The Church's Delight in Christ

For the church's delight in Christ, Flavel turns to Song of Solomon 5:9–16. In verse 9, the daughters of Jerusalem ask, “What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved?” The bride's response, in verses 10–16, culminates in her declaration: “He *is* altogether lovely.” Flavel applies these words to Christ, stating, “Look on him in what respect or particular you will; cast your eye upon this lovely object, and view him any way; turn him in your serious thoughts which way you will; consider his person, his offices, his works, or any other thing belonging to him; you will find him altogether lovely.”⁴⁷ (1) Christ is altogether lovely in his person: “The wonderful union and perfection of the divine and human nature in Christ, render him an object of admiration and adoration to angels and men.”⁴⁸ (2) Christ is altogether lovely in his offices: “All the promises of illumination, counsel and direction flow out of the *prophetical office*; all the promises of reconciliation, peace, pardon, and acceptance flow out of the *priestly office*... all the promises of converting, increasing, defending, directing, and supplying grace, flow out of the *kingly office*.”⁴⁹ (3) Christ is altogether lovely in his relations. As Redeemer, he delivers us from the depths of misery.⁵⁰ As Bridegroom, he espouses us to himself—we who are “deformed, defiled, and altogether unworthy.”⁵¹ As Advocate, he “pleads the cause of believers in heaven; appears for them in the presence of God, to prevent all new breaches, and continues the state of friendship and peace betwixt God and us.”⁵² As Friend, he loves us with a “fervent and strong affection.”⁵³

Christ's loveliness in his person, works, and offices, causes the believer to cry with delight: “This *is* my beloved, and this *is* my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”⁵⁴ Flavel defines such spiritual delight as “the complacency and well-pleasdedness of a renewed heart,

⁴⁷ II:215.

⁴⁸ II:218.

⁴⁹ II:219. His italics.

⁵⁰ II:219.

⁵¹ II:220.

⁵² II:221.

⁵³ II:222.

⁵⁴ Song 5:16.

in conversing with God, and the things of God, resulting from the agreeableness of them to the spiritual temper of his mind.”⁵⁵ He breaks this down into four components. (1) The “nature” of delight is the “complacency, rest, and satisfaction of the mind in God and spiritual things.” (2) The “object” of delight is “God himself, and the things which relate to him.” (3) The “subject” of delight is “a renewed heart.” (4) The “principle” of delight is “the agreeableness of spiritual things to the temper and frame of a renewed mind.” All told, the soul’s “spiritual senses” are satisfied in God.

These two “conjugal affections” (desire and delight) are the principal “returns” made by the soul unto God once he lets forth his “influences” upon it. And this, for Flavel, is the essence of the soul’s communion with God—“the life of our life, the joy of our hearts; a heaven upon earth.”⁵⁶ It is “a felt presence of God which no words can make another to understand; they feel that fountain flowing abundantly into the dry pits, the heart fills apace, the empty thoughts swell with a fullness of spiritual things, which strive for vent.”⁵⁷

Future Communion

While it is true that believers enjoy God at present, their delight pales in comparison to what is coming. Why? Flavel explains as follows. (1) “The spiritual pleasures the soul hath in the body, are but by reflection; but those it enjoys out of the body, are by immediate intuition.” (2) “The pleasures it now hath, though they be of a divine nature, yet they are relished by the vitiated appetite of a sick and distempered soul.” (3) “The pleasures of a gracious soul on earth are but rare and seldom, meeting with many and long interruptions.” (4) “The highest pleasures of a gracious soul in the body, are but the pleasures of an uncentered soul.” To sum up, Flavel believes that the soul’s pleasures at present “are but the pleasures of hope and expectation, which cannot bear any proportion to those of sight and full fruition.”⁵⁸ When, however, believers see God face-to-face, they will experience pleasure to the fullest. “This immediate knowledge

⁵⁵ II:409.

⁵⁶ IV:250. Flavel describes communion by way of twenty “excellencies” in IV:250–259.

⁵⁷ VI:389.

⁵⁸ III:45.

and sight of God face to face,” says Flavel, “will be infinitely more sweet, and ravishingly pleasant than any, or all the views we had of him here by faith ever were, or possibly could be.”⁵⁹ We will be like Christ and, therefore, able to commune with God to the fullest capacity of our souls. This will result in unparalleled delight, as our souls will rest fully in him. Flavel summarizes this hope, asking, “What is the life of glory but the vision of God, and the soul’s assimilation to God by that vision? From both which results that unspeakable joy and delight which passeth understanding.”⁶⁰

The Vision of God

Flavel makes it clear that we see God at present, in that we behold him through the eyes of faith.⁶¹ But this is nothing to be compared with what we will see in heaven. He remarks, “To see God in his word and works, is the happiness of the saints on earth; but to see him face to face, will be the fullness of their blessedness in heaven (1 John 3:2).”⁶² Again, “Those weak and dim representations made by faith, at a distance, are the very joy and rejoicing of a believer’s soul now (1 Pet. 1:7–8), but how sweet and transporting soever these visions of faith be, they are not worthy to be named in comparison with the immediate and beatifical vision (1 Cor. 13:12).”⁶³ As for what it means to see God face to face, Flavel says that it is “to know him as he is... to see him so perfectly and fully, that the understanding can proceed no farther in point of knowledge, concerning that great question, *What is God?*”⁶⁴ For Flavel, this is not primarily a sight of the eye, but a sight of the soul. We will be “filled” with the knowledge of God.

⁵⁹ III:48.

⁶⁰ II:95.

⁶¹ According to Flavel, men see Christ in three ways: (1) “carnally” with an eye of flesh (Isa. 53:2); (2) “fiducially” by the eye of faith (John 6:40); and (3) “beatifically” by the glorified eye (Job 19:26–27) (VI:411–412).

⁶² II:282.

⁶³ III:120.

⁶⁴ III:47.

The Image of God

As a result of this beatifical vision, we will be changed. Flavel explains how. (1) It will be a “satisfying” sight.⁶⁵ David says, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”⁶⁶ For Flavel, this means that “the understanding can know no more, the will can will no more; the affections of joy, delight, and love are at full rest and quiet in their proper center.” In a word, “God will be all in all.”⁶⁷ (2) It will be an “appropriating” sight.⁶⁸ This means that we will see God as *our* God. As Job cries, “In my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.”⁶⁹ On the judgment day, everyone will stand before God. For unbelievers, it will be a cause of dread, because they will have no personal interest in God. For believers, however, it will be a cause of joy, because they will see *their* God. (3) It will be a “deeply affecting” sight.⁷⁰ As Paul writes, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for *the* Saviour, *the* Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”⁷¹ That sight will change us forever, in that it will result in “perfect freedom from sin.”⁷² (4) It will be an “everlasting” sight.⁷³ Paul writes, “Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in *the* clouds, to meet the Lord in *the* air: and so shall we ever be with *the* Lord.”⁷⁴ This sight will never come to an end, but will hold our attention for all eternity. Flavel declares, “If one hour’s enjoyment of God, in the way of faith, be so sweet, and no price can be put upon it, nothing on earth taken in exchange for it; what must a whole eternity, in the immediate and full visions of that blessed face in heaven be!”⁷⁵

⁶⁵ III:121.

⁶⁶ Ps. 17:15.

⁶⁷ See 1 Cor. 15:28.

⁶⁸ III:121.

⁶⁹ Job 19:26–27.

⁷⁰ III:122.

⁷¹ Phil. 3:20–21.

⁷² VI:207.

⁷³ III:122.

⁷⁴ 1 Thess. 4:17.

⁷⁵ III:122.

In short, the beatifical vision means that the image of God will be restored in us. The faculties of the soul will again be marked by knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.⁷⁶ The mind will perceive God as the greatest good, and the affections will love God as the greatest good. God will impress his glory upon the soul to its fullest capacity, and it will make suitable returns to him.

The Enjoyment of God

These “returns” are summed up in the enjoyment of God. According to Flavel, there is a three-fold happiness to be enjoyed in heaven. (1) The “objective” happiness is God himself.⁷⁷ “If it could be supposed... that God should withdraw from the saints in heaven, and say, Take heaven, and divide it among you; but as for me, I will withdraw from you; the saints would fall a weeping in heaven, and say, Lord, take heaven, and give it to whom thou wilt; it is no heaven to us, except thou be there.” (2) The “subjective” happiness is “the attemperation and suiting of the soul and body to God.”⁷⁸ “It consists in removing from both all that is indecent, and inconsistent with a state of such complete glory and happiness, and in superinducting and clothing it with all heavenly qualities.”⁷⁹ (3) The “formal” happiness is “the fullness of satisfaction resulting from the blessed sight and enjoyment of God, by a soul so attempered to him.”⁸⁰ “Ah, what a happiness is here! To look and love, to drink and sing, and drink again at the fountain head of the highest glory!”⁸¹

Upon seeing God, the soul will be renewed in the image of God. This renewal will enable the soul to find its complete rest in God. And this will be the believer’s heaven. “Four things,” notes Flavel, “disturb the souls of believers in this world:” afflictions, temptations, corruptions, and absence from God. He adds, “If the three former causes of disquietness were totally removed, so that a believer were placed in such a condition upon earth, where no affliction could disturb him, no temptation trouble him, no corruption defile or grieve

⁷⁶ See Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10.

⁷⁷ I:193.

⁷⁸ I:193.

⁷⁹ I:194.

⁸⁰ I:194.

⁸¹ I:195.

him, yet his very absence from God must still keep him restless and unsatisfied.”⁸² Our hope is that one day we will be with our God, in whose “presence is fullness of joy,” and in whose “right hand there are pleasures forever.”⁸³

Conclusion

When Christ takes hold of us by His Spirit and we take hold of Him by our faith, we become one. By virtue of this mystical union, we partake of the blessings of redemption: present and future. As Flavel makes clear, “It is Christ himself who is made all this unto us: we can have no saving benefit separate and apart from the person of Christ: many would willingly receive his *privileges*, who will not receive his person; but it cannot be; if we will have one, we must take the other too: Yea, we must accept his person first, and then his benefits: as it is in the marriage covenant, so it is here.”⁸⁴



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⁸² II:284.

⁸³ Ps. 16:11.

⁸⁴ II:17. His italics.