

The Promised Fruit Of Christ's Sufferings

~Other Speakers M-R: Edward Payson:

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. —Isaiah, LIII, 11

Could any of us have seen what angels saw, when the Son of God left the bosom of his Father, and exchanged a throne in heaven for a manger on earth; could we have seen him divesting himself of his glory, laying aside the form of God, assuming the form of a servant, and appearing on earth, in the likeness of sinful flesh, with the avowed purpose of living in poverty, and dying an ignominious, agonizing, and accursed death—we should naturally have been led to exclaim, What adequate object can he have in view? What motive can be sufficiently powerful to induce such a being to make sacrifices so great, to encounter sufferings so exquisite! This question an apostle has partially answered. He has informed us, that Jesus Christ endured the cross and despised the shame for the sake of the joy set before him. In what this joy consisted, we may learn from the chapter before us, and especially from our text. It is here predicted that he shall see of the travail of his soul, that is, of the fruits or effects of his sufferings, and be satisfied. In the context we are informed what these fruits will be. He shall justify many, he shall see his seed, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. The joy set before him, for the sake of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame, was then the joy, which would result from seeing his Father glorified and sinners saved, in consequence of his incarnation, sufferings, and death. This, our text declares, he shall see, and the sight will satisfy him. While contemplating it, he will feel that he is amply rewarded for all his sacrifices, toils, and sufferings.

My hearers, the prediction in our text has already been partially fulfilled; it will be fulfilled in a still greater degree, before time shall end; and its complete fulfillment will be witnessed in eternity. These three assertions we propose to illustrate, establish, and improve.

I. The prediction before us has already been partially fulfilled. Already has our Redeemer seen much of the fruit of his sufferings. Our once barren world, watered by his tears and his blood, has already produced a large harvest of righteousness and salvation. his cross, like Aaron's rod, has budded and blossomed, and begun to bear precious incorruptible fruit. From his cross sprang all the religious knowledge, all the real goodness, all the true happiness, which has existed among mortals since the fall. On his cross, which, like the ladder seen by Jacob in vision, unites heaven and earth, myriads of immortal beings, who were sinking into the bottomless abyss, have ascended to the celestial mansions; —their myriads now alive, are following them in the ascent. In the patriarchs, prophets, and pious Israelites; in the apostles, and other primitive preachers of christianity; in the numerous converts, who, by their instrumentality, were turned from darkness to light; in all the truly pious individuals, who have since existed among men; in all the real Christians who are now on earth, our Redeemer has seen the fruits of his sufferings. In every real Christian now present he sees one of these fruits, sees a soul, which has been redeemed by his blood from endless wretchedness and despair, and made an heir of glory and honor and immortality. O then, how much, how very much, has he already seen effected, in fulfillment of the promise before us! How many immortal souls have been plucked as brands from everlasting burnings! How many individuals have been instructed, sanctified, pardoned, comforted, and made more than conquerors, through him that loved them! How many pious families have rejoiced together in his goodness; how many churches have been planted, watered, and made to flourish How much happiness have the members of all these churches enjoyed in life, in death, and in heaven! What an exceedingly great, and almost innumerable multitude of happy spirits, redeemed from among men, are now surrounding the throne of God and the Lamb! And even while I speak, the number of these happy spirits, and the harvest, which springs from a Savior's sufferings, is increasing. Even while I speak, sinners in different parts of the world are flocking into the kingdom of God. Even while I speak, immortal souls, washed in a Savior's blood, sanctified by his spirit, and just made victorious over the last enemy, death, are entering heaven from the four quarters of the globe, and commencing their everlasting song, Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion forever and ever.

And while our thrice blessed Redeemer has thus seen, and still sees the happiness of human beings increased by his sufferings, he has also seen, and still sees the glory of God augmented in an equal degree. He has seen millions, who were once enemies to his Father, transformed to friends; he has seen millions, who once blindly worshipped false gods, and ascribed to them the glory of creating, preserving, and governing the world, turning from their worthless idols to worship the only living and true God, who made heaven and earth. He has seen his Father's law obeyed and honored by multitudes, who, but for him, would have continued to trample it under

foot. He has seen ten thousand times ten thousand of prayers and ascriptions of praise, ascending from a world, which, but for his interposition, would never have offered one of these acceptable, spiritual sacrifices to his Father. He has seen the eternal throne surrounded, and him who sits upon it adored by almost countless multitudes, who were once dishonoring God on earth, and preparing to blaspheme him in hell. In fine, he has seen his religion flying through the world as on angels' wings, scattering blessings wherever she comes, and loudly proclaiming peace on earth, good will to men, and glory to God in the highest. Surely then, the prediction before us has already been partially fulfilled.

II. During the period which must elapse before time shall end, this prediction shall receive a much more ample accomplishment. That this will be the case, we might almost venture to predict from present appearances, even were the scriptures silent respecting it. Never since the days of the apostles have such exertions, as are now witnessed, been made to extend the triumphs of the cross; never has such a grand and powerful combination of means been employed for this purpose; never has the blessing of heaven more evidently attended human efforts; never have been seen such clear and striking indications that a great moral revolution in the world is approaching. If we turn to the scriptures, we shall find the hopes and expectations thus excited abundantly confirmed. We there find the most explicit predictions, the most animating assurances of the future universal prevalence of pure Christianity. All that has been seen is but the first fruits of that rich harvest, which our Redeemer will yet gather in. He who cannot lie has not only promised, but sworn by himself that the Jews and Gentiles shall be brought into the fold of Christ, that the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, even as the waters cover the seas; that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior, and that for many successive ages, he shall reign triumphantly over every nation, and kindred, and people.

While predicting this extension of the Messiah's kingdom, and describing the future glories of his reign on earth, the sacred writers exhaust all the powers of language, and burst forth into such poetic, enraptured strains, as the Spirit of God could alone inspire. And O, how will our Redeemer see the effects of his sufferings, when all these glowing descriptions shall be realized; when, with benevolent delight, he shall glance his eye over this once ruined, polluted, wretched world, and see all his enemies baffled; ignorance, error, superstition, vice, and misery banished, his religion everywhere enthroned in the hearts of men, the earth filled with holiness, and happiness, and peace; while from fertile plains, smiling villages, flourishing towns, and populous cities, one universal cloud of incense ascends before God, and the voice of the whole human family, as the voice of one man, pours forth the language of prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving to the Father of all; and the wide open gates of heaven are continually thronged by those, who pour into it from the east and the west, from the north and the south, to swell the number of its happy inhabitants, and add new voices to its everlasting songs! What countless myriads will then be saved! How gloriously will salvation triumph! How will God be glorified, how will the fruits of holiness abound, when all those parts of the world, which are now a moral wilderness, shall become as Eden, and the whole earth be made as the garden of God. And how will human happiness be increased, when generation after generation shall taste the felicity of heaven, during a long life on earth; and then, by an easy and peaceful death, be removed to the mansions of eternal rest.

III. But it is to the final consummation of all things, it is to eternity, that we must look for the complete fulfillment of this animating prediction. Not till then will the great work of redemption be finished; not till then will our Redeemer see so much of the fruit of his suffering, as is necessary to satisfy him. But then he will see all, that is here promised; all, that he ever expected to see; all, that is wanting to render him perfectly satisfied. He will then see the bodies of all his people raised from the grave, glorious, incorruptible, immortal, and perfectly resembling his own; for, says an apostle, addressing Christians, he shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, by which he is able to subdue even all things to himself.

Then will his triumph over death and the grave be complete. Then, as inspiration expresses it, death will be swallowed up of victory. Then, too, our Redeemer will see all his chosen people assembled around him, perfect in holiness, and perfectly happy in the contemplation of his glory and the enjoyment of his presence. For this he prayed just before his crucifixion. Father, said he, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. He cannot then be entirely satisfied, till this prayer is answered in its full extent, till every one whom the Father has given him is brought home to glory. At the period to which we refer, and not till then, will this be done. The last redeemed sinner will then have exchanged earth for heaven, and have begun to gaze with rapture on the unveiled glories of his Redeemer.

Finally. Our Savior will then see the great work, for the accomplishment of which he died, completed. He will see that spiritual edifice, the foundation of which was laid in his blood, which has been so long erecting, standing before him finished, resplendent in glory, and perfect in beauty. Says an apostle, Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that

he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. The church which Christ thus loved, and for which he gave himself, is called his body. All who compose it are styled his members. Now until the last member of this mystical body is raised to heaven, and fixed in its destined place, the body itself will not be perfect and complete, and of course, Christ its head will not be satisfied. But when that is done, his satisfaction will be complete. Then all his members will be fixed forever in the place, which he is now preparing for them, in a state of absolute perfection—perfection in knowledge, and holiness, and happiness. And O, what tongue of man can describe, what finite mind can conceive, the enrapturing sight, on which the eye of our Redeemer will then rest! He will see an innumerable multitude of immortal beings, with capacities like those of angels, reflecting in body and in mind, his own spotless, glorious image, no less perfectly than the polished mirror reflects the dazzling image of the noon day sun. He will see them all filled to overflowing, with unutterable felicity, and glowing, like the seraphs around them, with burning love and melting gratitude to him, who redeemed them by his blood. He will see them casting their eyes downward to contemplate the lake of fire, the everlasting burnings, from which they have been thus redeemed, and then raising them to gaze on their Deliverer, with emotions which even the language of heaven cannot express, but which he can read in their swelling, and almost bursting hearts. He will see them, in holy transports of affection and humility, casting themselves and their crowns at his feet; hear them cry, with a voice like that of many waters, and of mighty thunderings, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Blessing, and glory, and honor, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever. Stretching his omniscient eye through eternity, he will see them enjoying all this happiness, and ascribing all this glory to God, during its endless ages; their minds continually expanding, their faculties enlarging, and their souls drinking in more and more of that fullness of the Godhead, the whole of which they can never contain. And while he sees all this, he will see, that but for his sufferings and death, all these immortal beings, now so holy, so glorious, so happy, would have been sinners, demons, fiends, doomed to drink forever of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. All this, and much more than this, much more than man or angel can describe, he will see, and while he sees it, will exclaim, Father, It is enough; thy promise is fulfilled; I am satisfied.

Permit me now, my hearers, to lead your attention to some reflections, which our subject naturally suggests, and which will, I trust, be found to have an intimate connection with the object for which we are now assembled.

1. How great, how glorious, how worthy of its Author, does the work of redemption appear, when viewed in the light of this subject. If it was a work worthy of God, to create the world; if it is a work worthy of God, to preserve and govern the world, much more was it a work worthy of him to redeem the world. If his infinite perfections were ever called into action by an adequate motive, it was when they were called to exert themselves in effecting the salvation of a self-destroyed race of immortal intelligences, and to promote the glory of his great name in effecting it. The accomplishment of such a work as this was a motive, which might well bring down the Son of God from heaven, and carry him through all his toils, and support him under all his sufferings. His toils and sufferings were indeed inconceivably great; but so was the object which he had in view; and so was his promised reward, the joy set before him.

2. What conceptions is this subject suited to give us of the happiness, which is now enjoyed, and which, through eternity, will be enjoyed by our divine Redeemer! You have all, my friends, heard much of the happiness of heaven. Those of you, who are christians, know something of it experimentally; for you have tasted the first fruits of the heavenly inheritance. Your conceptions of it are, indeed, exceedingly inadequate, but you know it to be great. Estimate, then, as far as you are able, the amount of happiness which a single individual will enjoy in heaven, during a whole eternity. Proceed to multiply this amount of happiness by the almost countless number of the redeemed. Then recollect, that Jesus Christ has said, it is more blessed to give than to receive; that is, there is more blessedness, or happiness, in giving, than in receiving. Now Jesus Christ gives, and saints and angels receive, all the happiness, which creatures will ever enjoy in heaven. Of course, as the giver of this happiness, is more blessed, more happy, than all the receivers, could we then concentrate in one bosom all the happiness, which is enjoyed by all the saints and angels in heaven, it would still be inferior, far inferior to that, which is enjoyed by Jesus Christ alone. Christian, does not your heart exult to hear of the happiness which your Savior enjoys? Does it not labor, and swell almost to bursting, while vainly attempting to fathom that bottomless tide of felicity, which every moment pours, and through eternity will continue to pour, all its fullness into his in finite mind

3. in the light of this subject how great, how lovely does our Savior's benevolence appear? It is to his benevolence alone, that his happiness is to be ascribed. It is the benevolent mind only, which finds more happiness in giving than in receiving. Of course, if our Savior were not benevolent, he would never place his happiness in making others happy. He would be far from being satisfied, far from feeling that he is amply rewarded for all his toils and sufferings, by seeing others enjoy the fruits of them. But this it appears, does

satisfy him. All the reward which he expected, all which he desires is, the satisfaction of seeing God glorified, and sinners saved. Here then is perfect disinterested benevolence, benevolence worthy of him whose name is love.

And now, my hearers, permit me to apply these remarks to the object for which we are now assembled. This object is, as you are all aware, to unite our efforts, and afford our assistance, in extending the benefits of redemption, in carrying out this great work of man's salvation. We have seen that this is the noblest of God's works, a work, which is every way worthy of himself. To be employed as a willing instrument in carrying on this work, is then the greatest honor, which God can confer on man. Would you not think it an honor to be employed by him in preserving and governing a world? But greater, far greater is the honor of being employed as a co-worker with God in saving a world. This honor have all his saints. This honor we are invited to share.

Again. We have seen, that with the promotion of this work, our Savior's enjoyment of his promised reward is connected. In proportion as this work advances, his satisfaction increases. And does not this fact furnish all who love him with a powerful motive to exertion? Professed disciple of Jesus Christ, do you love, do you wish to gratify your Master, your Redeemer? Is it the language of your heart, what shall I render to my Lord for all his benefits? If so, this is the answer, Labor to promote that cause, which lies so near his heart; that cause, for which he shed his blood; Labor and pray, that the Savior may see more and more of the fruit of his sufferings. While doing this, you will, in effect, be employed by God as a hand, to convey to him a part of his promised reward. And what employment can be more honorable, more delightful, more congenial with the best and strongest feelings of every Christian's heart!

Farther, we have seen that this subject exhibits, in the clearest light, our Savior's disinterested benevolence. We have seen, that the joy set before him, for the sake of which he endured the cross and despised the shame, was the joy, not of exalting or of enriching himself, but of communicating happiness to others. This, this, was all the reward, which his benevolent heart desired, for labors and sufferings unexampled. In this, as in other respects, his example is proposed to us for our imitation. And imitate it we must, if we would prove that we are his disciples; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. I repeat it, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. No, the man who does not possess and exhibit some portion of the Savior's disinterested, self-denying benevolence, of his compassion for immortal souls, of his readiness to labor and suffer for their salvation, is not, cannot be, a Christian. He may be any thing else, but he cannot be a Christian. Nor can he be a disciple of Christ, who would not feel himself amply rewarded for all his exertions by the pleasure of seeing them crowned with success. This reward will, as we have seen, satisfy our Savior. Surely then, it ought to satisfy us. And this reward, all, who cordially engage in promoting his cause, shall receive. For the Savior must be satisfied. God has said it, and it must be done. He must have the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. As sin has reigned unto death, so must grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Talk not of difficulties. What are difficulties to omnipotence; to him, who speaks and it is done; who commands, and it stands fast; and who can cause a nation to be born in a day? All then, who cordially engage in this work, may engage in it with the certainty, that they shall not labor in vain. As certain as it is that the Savior shall not lose his reward, so certain it is, that they shall not lose theirs. His interest and theirs are inseparably united; when he is satisfied, they will be satisfied. Nor will his faithful servants be required to wait long for their promised reward. Not very far distant probably, is the period, when our Redeemer shall see the promise before us fulfilled in its utmost extent. Already do we witness no equivocal indications that its complete fulfillment is approaching. Already has the day of millennial glory begun to dawn. Already has the daystar been seen from mountains of the East. Already are "blest voices" heard exclaiming from heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; and we have no small reason for hoping, that, before the conclusion of the present century, the same blest voices will be heard to cry, Alleluia, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever! My hearers, when this period shall arrive, will it not be in the highest degree painful and mortifying to be constrained to say, the long predicted, long expected hour is at length come, but I have done nothing to hasten its arrival. My Savior has gathered in his promised harvest, but none of the seed, which produced it, was sown by my hand, or watered by my tears! If you would not be the subjects of reflections so mortifying, seize the precious opportunity which is afforded you, of committing your seed to the earth, so that hereafter, when he who soweth, and he who reapeth shall rejoice together, you may participate in the joy of your Lord.

Let no one attempt to excuse himself by saying my services are not wanted. Let no one say, Since God has promised that his Son shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied we may safely sit still, and leave him to fulfil this promise. He will indeed fulfil it, but he will fulfil it by human agency. And before it can be fulfilled, before every enemy can be put under our Savior's feet, many exertions must be made, much treasure expended, and many battles fought. Satan, the prince and god of this world, will not resign his usurped

dominion without a struggle. The more clearly he perceives, that his time is short, the greater will be his wrath, and the more violent his efforts. During that portion of time, which yet remains, the war which he has long waged with the Captain of our Salvation, will be carried on with unexampled fury. If you would survey the progress and result of this war, cast your eyes over the world, which is to be at once the field of battle, and the prize of victory. See the earth filled with strong holds and high places, in which the prince of darkness has fortified and made himself strong against the Almighty. See all the hosts of hell, and a large proportion of the inhabitants, the power, the wealth, the talents, and influence of the world ranged under his infernal standard. See his whole artillery of falsehoods, sophistries, objections, temptations, and persecution, brought into the field, to be employed against the cause of truth. See ten thousand pens, and ten times ten thousand tongues, hurling his poisoned darts among its friends. On the other hand, see the comparatively small band of our Savior's faithful soldiers drawn up in opposing ranks, and advancing to the assault, clothed in panoply divine, the banner waving over their heads, while in their hands they wield unsheathed the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the only weapon, which they are allowed, or wish, to employ. The charge is sounded, the assault is made, the battle is joined,—far and wide its fury rages; over mountains and plains, over islands and continents, extends the long line of conflict; for a time, alternate victory and defeat wait on either side. Now, exulting acclamations from the Christian army proclaim the fall of some strong hold of Satan. Anon, infuriated shouts from the opposing ranks announce to the world, that the cause of Christ is losing ground, or that some Christian standard bearer is fallen. —Meanwhile, far above the noise and tumult of the battle, the Captain of our salvation sits serene, issuing his commands, directing the motions of his followers, sending seasonable aid to such, as are ready to faint, and occasionally causing to be seen the lighting down of his own glorious arm, before which whole squadrons fall, or fly, or yield themselves willing captives. Feeble, and yet more feeble still, gradually becomes the opposition of his foes. Loud, and yet louder still, rise the triumphant acclamations of his friends, till at length, the cry of Victory! Victory! resounds from earth to heaven; and, Victory! Victory! is echoed back from heaven to earth. The warfare ceases,—the prize is won,—all enemies are put under the conquering Savior's feet; the whole earth, with joy, receives her king; and his kingdom, which consists in righteousness, and peace and holy joy, becomes co-extensive with the world. Such, my hearers, is the nature, and such will be the termination and result of the contest, which is now carrying on in the world. In this contest we are now all engaged on the one part or the other; for in this warfare there are no neutrals, he that is not with Christ is against him. Let us all, then, if we have not already done it, enlist under his banner, and make a common cause with him against a rebellious world; and when he shall appear to judge the universe, he will say to us, Come and sit down with me on my throne, even as I overcame, and am seated with my Father on his throne.