

Jesus, The Delight of Heaven

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DELIVERED BY

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"And they sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." [Revelation 5:9,10](#).

IF YOU want to know a man's character, it is well to inquire at his home. What do his children and servants think of him? What is the estimate formed by those who are always with him? George Whitefield was once asked his opinion of a person and his answer was very wise, for he replied, "I never lived with him." Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, see what an estimate is formed of your Lord at Home up yonder, where they know Him best and see Him most constantly, and in the clearest light! They have discovered no faults in Him. The angels who have beheld Him ever since they were created, the redeemed who have been with Him, some of them for thousands of years, have found no spot in Him. Their unanimous verdict expressed freely in joyful song is, "You are worthy; You are worthy; You are worthy."

If you desire to know a man, it will be well to find out what the best sort of people think of him, for the good opinion of bad men is worthless. "What have I done," said one of the Greek philosophers, "that you speak well of me?" when he found himself applauded by a man of evil character! A character that comes from men fitted to judge, who know what purity is, who have had their eyes opened to discriminate between virtue and its counterfeit—such a character is well worth having! One would not like to be thought ill of by a saint. We value the esteem of those whose judgement is sound, who are free from prejudice and who love only that which is honest and of good repute.

Now, Beloved, see what your Lord is thought of in the best society! Where they are all perfect! Where they are no longer children, but are all able to judge! Where they live in a clear light and are free from prejudice! Where they cannot make a mistake! See what they think of Him! They, themselves, are without fault before the Throne of God but they do not think themselves worthy—they ascribe worthiness to Jesus only. None stood up to take the book from the open hand of the great King. When they saw the Lamb do so, they felt that it was His right to take that prominent and honorable position—and with one accord they said, "You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain."

You and I cannot have too lofty thoughts of Jesus. We err in not thinking enough of Him. Let our estimate of Him grow and let us cry with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" Oh, for great thoughts of Jesus! Oh, to set Him on the highest imaginable throne in the conceptions of our soul, and to make every power and faculty of our manhood fall prostrate like the elders before Him, while whatever of honor God may put upon us we cast always at His feet, and always say, with heart and lip and act, "You are worthy, Jesus, Emmanuel, Redeemer, who have purchased us by Your blood. Worthy are You, worthy forever and forever."

It is to the estimate of the perfect spirits that I would call your attention. What do you think of Christ, you glorified ones, with whom we shall so soon unite? We have your answer in the words we have read. "You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

I. Notice, first, that the bright ones before the Throne adore the Lord Jesus as WORTHY OF THE HIGH OFFICE

OF MEDIATOR. They adore Him as alone worthy of that office, for there was silence in Heaven when the roll was held in God's hand and the challenge was given, "Who is worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof?" Dumb were the four living creatures. Silent were the cherubim and seraphim—in mute solemnity sat the 24 elders on their thrones.

They put in no claim for worthiness, but by their silence and their subsequent song when Christ came forward, they admitted that He, alone, could unfold the purposes of God and interpret them to the sons of men.

I take it that one of the meanings of our Lord's taking the book into His hand was this—that He was the Fulfiller of that mysterious roll so closely sealed. He came to unfold it and, by transactions in which He should hold the chief place, it was to be fulfilled. The key of the purposes of God is Christ. We do not know what the decrees of God may be until they are fulfilled, but we do know that of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, and that everything will begin and end with Jesus, for He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

He is the initial letter of all history and He will be the "finis" of it when He shall give up the Throne to God, even the Father, that God may be All in All. As our Lord Jesus is the Fulfiller, so He is the Interpreter. He has been with the Father and, "No man knows the Father save the Son, and He to whom the Son shall reveal Him." He is the great Interpreter to us of the mind of God. His Spirit, dwelling in us, takes of His things and shows them unto us. And in the light of the Spirit we see the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"No man comes to the Father," He says, "but by Me," for no man can expound the Father to us or conduct us to the Father save Jesus Christ, the sole Interpreter of the Divine secret.

And so I regard the expressions here as setting Him forth as Mediator, for He it is who stands between God and man. He is worthy to take the book in His hands on our behalf and grasp for us the indentures of our inheritance beyond the stars. No one else can go in for us to the august Presence of the Most High and take the title deeds of Grace into His hands on our behalf. But Christ can do it and, taking it, He can unfold it and expound to us the wondrous purpose of electing love towards the chosen ones. Stand back, you sons of antichrist, with your bronze foreheads! How dare you bring forward a virgin, blessed among women, and cause her very name to be defiled by styling her our intercessor before God? How dare you bring your saints and make these to mediate between God and men? "There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus."

The saints in Heaven sing of Him, "You are worthy," and they salute none other! They reserve no homage for any other intercessor or mediator or interpreter or fulfiller of Divine Grace, for they know of no other. Unto Him they give, and to Him alone, the honor to go in unto the King on the behalf of the sons of men, and to take the book in His hands. Notice carefully to what they ascribe this worthiness—"You are worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, for you were slain." Now, the case stands thus—God has given to us innumerable blessings in the Covenant of Grace—but they are given upon a condition. There are two sides to a covenant.

Jesus Christ is our representative and Covenant Head, and the condition which, as the Mediator, He had to fulfill was this—that in due time He would offer to Divine Justice an honorable amend for all the injury done to the honor of God by our sins. As Mediator, our Lord's worthiness did not merely arise from His Person as God and perfect Man—this fitted Him to undertake the office, but His right to claim the privileges written in the Magna Charta which God held in His hands, His right to take possession for His people of that seven-sealed indenture lies in this—that He has fulfilled the condition of the Covenant and, therefore, they sing, "You are worthy, for You were slain."

Not, "You are worthy, for You were born on earth and You did live a holy life," but, "You were slain." For He must render recompense to incensed Justice and injured Holiness—and that He did upon the bloody tree. Whenever we begin to talk about this, the believers in the modern atonement—which is no Atonement, but a hazy piece of cloudland—say to us, "Oh, you hold the commercial theory, do you?" They know right well that we only use, because the Bible uses them, commercial expressions as metaphors. But I venture to say to them, "You may well assert that there is nothing commercial about your system, for the commercial value of a counterfeit farthing would be too much to pay for the atonement in which you believe."

I believe in an Atonement in which Christ literally took the sin of His people and for them endured the wrath of God, giving to Justice quid pro quo for all that was due to it, or an equivalent for it—bearing, that we might not bear, the wrath that was due to us. Jesus, Himself, really "bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." There was a literal, positive, actual Substitution of "the Just for the unjust to bring us to God." No other atonement is worth the breath used in preaching of it. It will neither give comfort to the conscience nor Glory to God. But on this rock our souls may rest without fear and it is because of this that they sing in Heaven, "You are worthy, for You were slain.

"You can claim our absolution—You can take the Magna Charta of Your elect into Your hands and unroll the Covenant established with them of old. You can reveal to us the sure mercies of David, for Your part in the Covenant has been fulfilled. Your Substitutionary death has made Your people heirs with You." Gladly would I fly yonder to join their song, but till then I'll lisp it forth as best I may—"You are worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, for You were slain."

II. Secondly, in Heaven they adore the Lord as their REDEEMER. "You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood." The metaphor of redemption, if I understand it, signifies this—a thing which is redeemed, in the strictest sense, belonged beforehand to the person who redeemed it. Under the Jewish law, lands were mortgaged as they are now. And when the money lent upon them, or the service due for them, was paid, the land was said to be redeemed. An inheritance first belonged to a person and then went away from him by stress of poverty. But if a certain price was paid it came back.

Now, "all souls are Mine" says the Lord, and the souls of men belong to God. The metaphor is used and, mark, these expressions are but metaphors. But the sense under them is no metaphor—it is fact. Our souls had come under mortgage, as it were, through the sin committed, so that God could not accept us without violating His Justice until something had been done by which He, who is infinitely Just, could freely distribute His Grace to us. Now, Jesus Christ has taken the mortgage from God's inheritance. "The Lord's portion is His people." That portion was hampered till Jesus set it free. We were always God's, but we had fallen into slavery to sin. Jesus came to make recompense for our offenses, and thus we return to where we were before, only with additional gifts which His Grace bestows.

In Heaven, they say, "You have redeemed us." And they tell the price, "You have redeemed us to God by Your blood." There lay the price—the sufferings and death of Jesus have set His people free from the slavery into which they were brought. They are redeemed and they are redeemed unto God. That is the point—they come back to God as lands come back to the owner when the mortgage is discharged. We come back to God, again, to whom we always and ever did belong, because Jesus has redeemed us unto God by His blood.

And please notice that the redemption they sing about in Heaven is not general redemption. It is particular redemption. "You have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." They do not speak of the redemption of every tongue, and people, and nation, but of a redemption out of every tongue, and people, and nation! I thank God I do not believe that I was redeemed in the same way that Judas was, and no more. If so, I shall go to Hell as Judas did. General redemption is not worth anything to anybody, for of itself it secures to no one a place in Heaven—but the special redemption which does redeem, and redeems men out of the rest of mankind—is the redemption that is to be prayed for, and for which we shall praise God forever and ever.

We are redeemed from among men. "Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it." "He is the Savior of all men"—let us never deny that—"but especially of them that believe." There is a wide, far-reaching sacrificial Atonement which brings untold blessings to all mankind, but by that Atonement a special Divine object was aimed at, which will be carried out—and that object is the actual redemption of His own elect from the bondage of their sins—the price being the blood of Jesus Christ. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, may we have a share in this particular, efficient redemption, for this, alone, can bring us where they sing the new song!

This redemption is one which is personally realized. You have redeemed us to God. Redemption is sweet, but, "You have redeemed us" is sweeter, still! If I can but believe He loved me and gave Himself for me, that will tune my tongue to sing Jehovah's praise, for what did David say? "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness." He repeated that several times over, but it would never have been carried out unless he had said, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed out of the hand of the enemy." In vain he called upon others, their tongues were dedicated to their pleasures! But the redeemed of the Lord are a fit choir to magnify His name.

The pith of what I have to say is this—in Heaven they praise Jesus Christ because He has redeemed them—my dear Hearer, has He ever redeemed you? "Oh," says one, "I believe He has redeemed everybody!" But of what use is that? Do not the great mass of mankind sink to perdition? If you rest upon such a redemption, you rest upon what will not save you! He redeemed His own elect, or, in other words, He redeemed Believers. "God so loved the world" is a text much cried up, but pray go on with it. How much did He love the world? "That He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish."

There is the specialty of it—"Whoever believes in Him," and if you do not believe in Him, you have no part or lot in His redemption! You are slaves to sin and Satan, and so will you live and so will you die. But believing in the Lord Jesus you have the marks of being specially and effectually redeemed by Him. And when you get to Heaven this will be your song—"You have redeemed us unto God by Your blood out of every kindred, and people, and tongue." Blessed be God for this! Some of all sorts are saved, some of all colors, ranks,

nations and ages are saved! Some of all conditions of education and morals, some of the poorest, and some of the richest are redeemed—so that when we all assemble in Heaven, though we make a motley throng on earth, we shall constitute a united choir, having all our voices tuned to this one note, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

III. Thirdly, and briefly, in Heaven they praise Christ, not merely as Mediator and as Redeemer, but as the DONOR OF THEIR DIGNITIES. They are kings and they reign. We, too, are kings, but as yet we are not known or recognized, and often we, ourselves, forget our high descent. Up there they are crowned monarchs, but they say, "You have made us kings." They are priests, too, as we are now, every one of us. When a fellow comes forward in all sorts of curious garments and says he is a priest, the poorest child of God may say, "Stand away and don't interfere with my office—I am a priest—I know not what you may be. You surely must be a priest of Baal, for the only mention of the word vestments in Scripture is in connection with the temple of Baal."

The priesthood belongs to all the saints! They sometimes call you laity, but the Holy Spirit says of all the saints, "You are God's clerics"—you are God's clergy. Every child of God is a clergyman or a clergywoman. There are no priestly distinctions known in Scripture. Away with them! Away with them forever! The Prayer Book says, "Then shall the priest say." What a pity that word was ever left there. The very word, "priest," has such a smell of the sulfur of Rome about it, that so long as it remains, the Church of England will give forth an ill savor. Call yourself a priest, Sir? I wonder men are not ashamed to take the title, when I remember what priests have done in all ages—what priests connected with the "church of Rome" have done!

I repeat what I have often said—I would sooner a man pointed at me in the street and called me a devil than called me a priest, for bad as the devil has been, he has hardly been able to match the crimes, cruelties and villainies which have been transacted under the cover of a special priesthood. From that may we be delivered! But the priesthood of God's saints, the Priesthood of Holiness, which offers prayer and praise unto God—this they have in Heaven, and they say of it, "You have made us priests." What the saints are, and what they are to be, they ascribe to Jesus. They have no glory but what they received from Him, and they know it, and are perpetually confessing it. Let our hearts sing with the redeemed—"All for Jesus, for all is from Jesus! All for Jesus, for Jesus has given us all we have." Let us begin that music here.

IV. Once again. They in Heaven adore the Savior as DIVINE. I am not straining the words of my text at all, but keeping the whole passage before me. If you read the two chapters you will find that while they sing to God, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive honor and glory and power," they sing to the Lamb, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom." The ascriptions which are given to the Creator are also

offered to the Lamb, and He is represented as sitting on the same Throne. Mark carefully that the adoration which they give to Him, He does not resent.

When John fell down to worship one of the angels, he received an earnest protest, "See you do it not." Now, if the worship given to Christ had been wrong, the thrice holy Savior would have exclaimed most earnestly, "See you do it not." But He intimates no objection to the worship, although it is freely rendered by all the intelligent beings before the Throne. Depend upon it, my Hearer, you will never go to Heaven unless you are prepared to worship Jesus Christ as God. They are all doing it there—you will have to come to it—and if you entertain the notion that He is a mere man, or that He is anything less than God, I am afraid you will have to begin at the beginning and learn what true religion means. You have a poor foundation to rest upon.

I could not trust my soul with a mere man, or believe in an Atonement made by a mere man! I must see God Himself putting His hands to so gigantic a work. I cannot imagine a mere man being thus praised as the Lamb is praised. Jesus is "God over all, blessed forever." When we ever speak at all severely of Socinians and Unitarians you must not be surprised at it, because if we are right, they are blasphemers! And if they are right we are idolaters—there is no choice between the two. We never could agree and never shall while the world stands. We preach Christ, the Son of God, as very God of very

God, and if they reject Him, it is not for us to pretend that it makes no difference, when, in fact, it makes all the difference in the world!

We would not wish them to say more than they believe to be true, and they must not expect us to say less than we believe to be true. If Jesus is God, they must believe it, and must worship Him as such, or else they cannot participate in the salvation which He has provided. I love the Deity of Christ! I preach His Humanity with all my might, and I rejoice that He is the Son of Man, but oh, He must be the Son of God, too, or there is no peace for me—

"Till God in human flesh I see, My thoughts no comfort find.

The holy, just, and sacred Three

Are terrors to my mind.

But if Emmanuel's face appears,

My hope, my joy begins:

His name forbids my slavish fear;

His Grace removes my sins."

Now I have almost done, only this is the outcome of the subject. You see the opinion they have of Jesus in Heaven. My dear Friends, are you of the same mind with them? You will never go there till you are! There are no sects in Heaven—no two parties. They all hold the same views about Jesus. Let me ask you, then, are you of the same persuasion as the glorified saints?

They praise Jesus for what He has done. It is very wonderful to my mind that when they are adoring the Savior they seem to strike that one key—they praise Him for what He has done—and they praise Him for what He has done for them. They might have praised Him for what He is, but in the text they do not. Now, this reason which has such say in Heaven is the very same which moves us here—"We love Him because He first loved us," and as if to show that this kind of love is not an inferior love, the love of gratitude seems to be the very sum and substance of the love of Heaven—"You were slain, and have redeemed us." Can you praise Him for redeeming you?

Dear Hearer, you have heard about Jesus hundreds of times. Has He saved you? You know there is a fountain filled with blood which cleanses from all sin—has it cleansed you? You know He has woven a robe of righteousness which covers His people from head to foot—has He covered you with it? You will never praise Him till that is the case—and you cannot go to Heaven till you are ready for His praise. "Well, but I go to my place of worship." So you may. But that will not save you till you get a personal hold on Christ for yourself. "My mother and father were godly people." I am glad they were. I hope they won't have an ungodly son.

You must have a personal religion—something done by Jesus Christ for you. Young woman over yonder, has Jesus Christ redeemed you from among the mass of the people? Has He brought you out from your sins and separated you to Himself? Have you had the blood applied to your soul—the precious blood of sprinkling which speaks peace in the conscience? Time is flying and you have been hearers month after month—will it always be so? Will you never cry unto God, "Lord, let me know Your redemption! Let me have a share in the precious blood! Let me be washed from my sins"?

Remember, you must be able to praise Him for what He has done for you, or else you are not of the opinion of those in Heaven and into Heaven you cannot go! It is clear from the song I have been reading that in Heaven Christ is everybody and everything. Is Christ so with you? It is a solemn question to put to persons. Is Christ first and last and middle with you, top and bottom, foundation and pinnacle, All in All? He knows not Christ who does not know that Christ is All in All! Christ and company will never do. Christ is the sole Savior, the sole Trust, the one Prophet, Priest and King to all who accept Him.

Is He everything to you? Ah, there are some who think they love Christ! They think they trust Christ! But if He were to come to their house He would have a seat at the far end of the table if they treated Him as they treat Him now. They give Him part of the Sabbath—they were loafing about all the morning, they were only able to get here this evening—and even now they have not come to worship, but only out of curiosity. A chapter in the Bible—how long is it, young Man, since you read one? Private prayer—ah, I must not go into that! It is such a sorry story that you would have to tell.

If anybody said to you, "You are not a Christian," you would be offended. Well, I will say it, and you may be offended if you like, but remember you should be offended with yourself rather than with me. If you offend my Lord I am not at all afraid of your being offended with His servant, and therefore I tell you, if Christ is anything short of Lord and

King in your soul, Christ and you are wide apart! He must be in the front rank, Lord High Admiral upon the sea, and Commander-in-Chief on the land. He is not going to be a petty officer, to come in at your odd times to be a lackey to you! You must take Him to be Head, Lord and Master. Is it so with you? If not, you differ from those in Heaven, for He is All in All to them!

Once more. Can you join with the words of our text and say, "He is worthy, He is worthy"? I hope there are many here who, if they for a moment heard that full burst of song, "He is worthy," would join it very heartily, and say, "Yes, He is worthy." I seemed, tonight when I was praying, as if I could hear them sing, "He is worthy," and I could hardly restrain myself from shouting, "Well sing you so, you spirits before the Throne! He is worthy!" If we were to loose our silence for a moment, and break the decorum which we have observed through the sermon, and with one unanimous shout cry, "Yes, He is worthy," I think it would be a fit thing to do!

Jesus is worthy of my life, worthy of my love, worthy of everything I can say for Him! He is worthy of a thousand times more than that, worthy of all the music and harps on earth, worthy of all the songs of all the sweetest singers, worthy of all the poetry of the best writers, worthy of all the adoration of every knee! He is worthy of all that every man has, or can conceive or can compass! He is worthy to be adored of all that are in the earth and under the earth, and in the sea, and in the heavens, and in the Heaven of heavens! He is worthy!

We say, "worthy," because we cannot tell how worthy. I think these good singers in Heaven desired to give to the Lamb His due and then they paused, and said to themselves, "We cannot give Him the praise He deserves, but we know that He is worthy. We cannot pretend to give Him what He is worthy of, but we will say, 'He is worthy.'" Yes, He is worthy! If I had 50,000 lives in this poor body, He is worthy that they should all be poured out, one after another, in martyrdom! One should be burned alive, and another should be broken on the wheel, and another should be starved by inches, and another should be dragged at the heels of a wild horse—and He would deserve them all! He is worthy, and if we had all the mines of India—silver and gold and gems, the rarest treasures of all the kings that ever lived, if we were to give it all up to Him and go barefoot—He is worthy!

And if, after having done that, we were to abide day and night in perpetual work without rest, all for His sake, and if each one of us were multiplied into a million, and all of us labored so, He is worthy! Worthy! I would make every drop of dew sparkle with His praise and every leaf in the forest bear His name! I would make every dell and every mountain vocal with adoration and teach the stars, and teach the angels above the stars, His praise—

"Oh for a thousand tongues to sing My great Redeemer's praise!"

Let time and space become one mouth for song, and all eternity sound forth that mighty word, "He is worthy." Do you feel that He is worthy? If you do not, you cannot be admitted where they sing that song, for if you could enter there you would be unhappy. Never hope to enter there until your soul can say, "I have rested in His blood. I am, by it, redeemed unto God and the Redeemer is worthy! And I will bear witness of His worthiness till time shall be no more."

God bless you all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation 4:5. HYMNS FROM
"OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 416, 417.