



# **Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 45: 1899**

by

*Charles Spurgeon*

## About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 45: 1899* by Charles Spurgeon

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## Foretastes of the Heavenly Life

A Sermon

(No. 2607)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, January 29th, 1899,

(C. H. Spurgeon Memorial Sabbath,)

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

*Early in the year 1857.*

NOTE: This edition of this sermon is taken from an earlier published edition of Spurgeon's 1857 message. The sermon that appears in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 45, was edited and abbreviated somewhat. For edition we have restored the fuller text of the earlier published edition, while retaining a few of the editorial refinements of the *Met Tab* edition.

"And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us."—Deuteronomy 1:25.

YOU REMEMBER the occasion concerning which these words were written. The children of Israel sent twelve men as spies into the land of Canaan, who brought back with them the fruit of the land, amongst the rest a bunch of grapes from Eshcol too heavy to be borne by one man, and which, therefore, two of them carried on a staff between them. But I shall not remark upon the figure, but only say that as they learned of Canaan by the fruit of the land brought to them by the spies, so you and I, even while we are on earth, if we be the Lord's beloved, may learn something of what heaven is—a state to which we are to attain hereafter—by certain blessings which are brought to us even while we are here on earth.

The Israelites were sure that Canaan was a fertile land when they saw the fruits which it produced, brought by their brethren, and when they ate thereof. Perhaps there was but little for so many, and yet those who did eat were made at once to understand that it must have been a goodly soil that produced such fruit. Now, then, beloved, we who love the Lord Jesus Christ have had clusters of the grapes of Eshcol. We have had some fruits of heaven even since we have been on earth, and by them we are able to judge of the richness of the soil of Paradise which bringeth forth such rare and choice delights.

I shall, therefore, present to you some views of heaven in order to give you some idea how it is that the Christian on earth enjoys a foretaste of the blessings that are yet to be revealed. Possibly, there are scarce two Christians who have the same news of heaven; though they all expect the same heaven, yet the most prominent feature in it is different to each different mind according to its constitution.

I. Now, I will confess what is to me the most prominent feature of heaven, judging at the present moment. At another time I may love heaven better for another thing: but lately I have learned to love heaven as A PLACE OF SECURITY.

We have been greatly saddened as we have seen some high professors turning from their profession—ay, and worse still, some of the Lord's own beloved committing grievous faults and

slips, which have brought disgrace upon their character, and injury to their souls. Now I have learned to look to heaven lately as a place where we shall never, never sin—where our feet shall be fixed firmly upon a rock—where there is neither tripping nor sliding—where faults shall be unknown—where we shall have no need to keep watch against an indefatigable enemy, because there is no foe that shall annoy us—where we shall not be on our guard day and night watching against the incursion of foes, for there "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." I have looked upon it as the land of complete security, where the garment shall be always white, where the face shall be always anointed with fresh oil, where there is no fear of slipping or turning away, but where we shall stand fast for ever. And I ask you, if that be a true view of heaven—and I am sure it is one feature of it—do not the saints even on earth enjoy some fruits of Paradise, even in this sense? Do we not even in these huts and villages below sometimes taste the joys of blissful security? The doctrine of God's word is, that all who are in union with the Lamb are safe, that all believers must hold on their way, that those who have committed their souls to the keeping of Christ shall find him a faithful and immutable keeper. On such a doctrine we can enjoy security even on earth; not that high and glorious security which renders us free from every slip and trip, but nevertheless a security well nigh as great, because it secures us against ultimate ruin, and renders us certain that we shall attain to eternal felicity.

And, beloved, have you never sat down and reflected on the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints? I am sure you have, and God has brought home to you a sense of your security in the person of Christ. He has told you that your name is graven on his hand; he has whispered in your ear the promise, "Fear thou not, I am with thee." You have been led to look upon him, the great Surety of the covenant, as faithful and true, and, therefore, bound and engaged to present you, the weakest of the family, with all the chosen race, before the throne of God; and in such sweet contemplation I am sure you have been drinking some of the juice of his spiced pomegranates; you have had some of the choice fruits of Paradise; you have had some of the enjoyments which the perfect saints have above in a sense of your complete and eternal security in Christ Jesus. Oh, how I love that doctrine of the perseverance of the saints! I shall at once renounce the pulpit when I cannot preach it, for any other form of teaching seems to me to be a blank desert and a howling wilderness—as unworthy of God as it would be beneath even my acceptance, frail worm as I am. I could never either believe or preach a gospel which saves me to-day and rejects me tomorrow—a gospel which puts me in Christ's family one hour, and makes me a child of the devil the next,—a gospel which justifies and then condemns me—a gospel which pardons me, and afterward casts me down to hell. Such a gospel is abhorrent to reason itself, much more it is contrary to the mind of God whom we delight to serve. Every true believer in Jesus can sing, with Toplady,—

"My name from the palms of his hands  
 Eternity will not erase;  
 Impressed on his heart it remains  
 In marks of indelible grace:  
 Yes, I to the end shall endure.  
 As sure as the earnest is given;  
 More happy, but not more secure,  
 The glorified spirits in heaven."

Yes, beloved, we do enjoy a sense of perfect security even as we dwell in this land of wars and fightings. As the spies brought their brethren bunches of the grapes, so in the security we enjoy, we have a foretaste and earnest of the bliss of Paradise.

II. In the next place, most probably the greater part of you love to think of heaven under another aspect: as A PLACE OF PERFECT REST.

Son of toil, you love the sanctuary because it is there you sit to hear God's word, and rest your wearied limbs. When you have wiped the hot sweat from your burning brow, you have often thought of heaven where your labors shall be over; you have sung with sweet emphasis,—

"There shall I bathe my weary soul

In seas of heavenly rest,

And not a wave of trouble roll Across my peaceful breast."

Rest, rest, rest,—this is what you want. And to me this idea of heaven is exceedingly beautiful. Rest I know I never shall have beneath this sky, while Christ's church is as barbarous as it is; for the most barbarous of masters is the church of Christ. I have served it, and am well-nigh hounded to my grave by Christian ministers perpetually requiring me to do impossibilities that they know no mortal strength can accomplish. Willing I am to labor till I drop, but more I cannot do; yet I am perpetually assailed on this side and the other, till, go where I may, there seems no rest for me till I slumber in my grave; and I do look forward to heaven with some degree of happiness. There I shall rest from labors constant and perpetual, though much loved.

And you, too, who have been toiling long to gain an object you have sought after; you will be glad when you get to heaven. You have said if you could get it you would lie down and rest; you have toiled after a certain amount of riches, you have said if you could once gain a competence you would then make yourself at ease. Or, you have been laboring long to gain a certain point of character, and then you have said you would lay down your arms and rest. Ay, but you have not reached it yet; and you love heaven because heaven is the goal to the racer, the target of the arrow of existence; you love heaven because it will be the couch of time, ay, an eternal rest for the poor weary struggler upon earth. You love it as a place of rest; and do we never enjoy a foretaste of heaven upon earth in that sense? O, yes, beloved! blessed be God, "we who have believed do enter into rest." Our peace is like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea. God may give to his people rest: even the rest that remaineth for the people of God. We have stormy trials and bitter troubles in the world; but we have learned to say, "Return unto thy rest, my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Did you never, in times of great distress, climb up to your closet, and there on your knees pour out your heart before God? Did you never feel after you had so done that you had bathed yourself in rest, so that—

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,

And storms of sorrow fall,"

you cared not one whit for them? Though wars and tumults were raging around you, you were kept in perfect peace, for you had found a great protecting shield in Christ; you had looked upon the face of God's Anointed. Ah, Christian, that rest without a billow of disturbance, that rest so placid and serene, which in your deepest troubles you have been enabled to enjoy in the bosom of Christ, is to you a bunch of the mighty vintage of heaven, one grape of the heavenly cluster which you shall soon partake of in the land of the hereafter. Here, again, you see we can have a foretaste of heaven, and realize what it is even while here upon earth.

III. That idea of heaven as a place of rest will suit some indolent professors, and, therefore, let me just give the very opposite of it. I do think that one of the worst sins a man can be guilty of in this world is to be idle. I can almost forgive a drunkard, but a lazy man I do think there is very little pardon for. I think a man who is idle has as good a reason to be a penitent before God as David bad when he was an adulterer, for the most abominable thing in the world is for a man to let the grass grow up to his ankles and do nothing. God never sent a man into the world to be idle. And there are some who make a tolerably fair profession, but who do nothing from one year's end to the other.

The next idea of heaven is, that it is A PLACE OF UNINTERRUPTED SERVICE. It is a place where they serve God day and night in his temple, and never know weariness, and never require to slumber. Do you know what is the deliciousness of work? For although we must complain when people expect impossibilities of us, it is the highest enjoyment of life to be busily engaged for Christ. Tell me the day I do not preach, I will tell you the day in which I am not happy; but the day in which it is my privilege to preach the gospel, and labor for God, is generally the day of my peaceful and quiet enjoyment after all. Service is delight. Praising God is pleasure. Laboring for him is the highest delight a mortal can know, O, how sweet it must be to sing his praises, and never feel that the throat is dry! O, how blessed to flap the wing for ever and never feel it flag! O, what sweet enjoyment to run upon his errands, evermore to circle round the throne of God in heaven while eternity shall last, and never once lay the head on the pillow, never once feel the throbbings of fatigue, never once the pangs that admonish us that we need to cease, but to keep on for ever like eternity's own self—a broad river rolling on with perpetual floods of labor! O, that must be enjoyment! That must be, indeed, a heaven, to serve God day and night in his temple! But you have served God on earth, and have had foretastes of that. I wish some of you knew the sweets of labor a little more, for although labor breedeth sweat, it breedeth sweets too—more especially labor for Christ. There is a satisfaction before the work; there is a satisfaction in the work; there is a satisfaction after the work, and there is a satisfaction in looking for the fruits of the work; and a great satisfaction when we get the fruits. Labor for Christ is, indeed, the robing-room of heaven; if it be not heaven itself, it is one of the most blissful foretastes of it. Thank God, Christian, if you can do any thing for your Master. Thank him if it is your privilege to do the least thing for him, for remember in so doing he is giving you a taste of the grapes of Eshcol. But you indolent people, you do not get the grapes of Eshcol, because you are too lazy to carry that big bunch. You would like it to come into your mouths without the trouble of gathering it; but you do not care to go forth and serve God. You sit still and look after yourselves, but what do you do for other people? You go to your place of worship; you talk about your Sunday-school and Sick Visitation Society, and so on. You never teach in the Sunday-school, and you never visit a sick person, and yet you take a great deal of credit to yourself while you do nothing at all. You will never know much of the enjoyments of heavenly glory until you know a little of the work of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

IV. Another view of heaven is, that it is A PLACE OF COMPLETE VICTORY AND GLORIOUS TRIUMPH. This is the battlefield; there is the triumphal procession. This is the land of the sword and the spear; that in the land of the wreath and the crown. This is the land of the garment rolled in blood and of the dust of the fight; that is the land of the trumpet's joyful sound—that is the place of the white robe and of the shout of conquest. O, what a thrill of joy shall shoot through the hearts of all the blessed when their conquests shall be complete in heaven, when death itself,

the last of foes, shall be slain—when Satan shall be dragged captive at the chariot wheels of Christ—when he shall have overthrown sin and trampled corruption as the mire of the streets—when the great shout of universal victory shall rise from the hearts of all the redeemed! What a moment of pleasure shall that be! O, dear brethren, you and I have foretastes of even that. We know what conquests, what souls' battles we have even here. Did you never struggle against an evil heart, and at last overcome it? O, with what joy did you lift your eyes to heaven, the tears flowing down your cheeks, and say, "Lord, I bless thee that I have been able to overcome that sin." Did you ever have a strong temptation, and did you wrestle hard with it, and know what it was to sing with great joy, "My feet slipped; but thy mercy held me up?" Have you, like Bunyan's Christian, fought with old Apollyon, and have you seen him flap his dragon-wings and fly away? There you had a foretaste of heaven; you had just a guess of what the ultimate victory will be. In the death of that one Philistine you had the destruction of the whole army. That Goliath who fell beneath your sling and stone was but one out of the multitude who must yield their bodies to the fowls of heaven. God gives you partial triumphs that they may be the earnest of ultimate and complete victory. Go on and conquer, and let each conquest, though a harder one and more strenuously contested, be to you as a grape of Eshcol, a foretaste of the joys of heaven!

V. Furthermore, without doubt one of the best views we can ever give of heaven is, that it is A STATE OF COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD, recognized and felt in the conscience. I suppose that a great part of the joy of the blessed saints consists in a knowledge that there is nothing in them to which God is hostile; that their peace with God has not any thing to mar it; that they are so completely in union with the principles and thoughts of the Most High; that his love is set on them; that their love is set on him; that they are one with God in every respect. Well, beloved, and have we not enjoyed a sense of acceptance here below? Blotted and blurred by many doubts and fears, yet there have been moments when we have known ourselves as well accepted as we shall know ourselves to be even when we stand before the throne. There have been bright days with some of us, when we could "set to our seal" that God was true; and, when afterward, feeling that the Lord knoweth them that are his, we could say, "And I know that I am his too." Then have we known the meaning of Dr. Watts when he sang,—

"When I can say, 'My God is mine;'  
 When I can feel thy glories shine;  
 I tread the world beneath my feet,  
 And all that earth calls good or great.  
 While such a scene of sacred joys  
 Our raptured eyes and souls employs,  
 Here we could sit, and gaze away  
 A long, an everlasting day."

We had such a clear view of the perfection of Christ's righteousness that we felt that God had accepted us, and we could not be otherwise than happy; we had such a sense of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, we felt sure that our sins were all pardoned, and that they never could be mentioned unto us in mercy for ever. And, beloved, though I have spoken of other joys, let me say, this is the cream of all of them, to know ourselves accepted in God's sight. O! to feel that I, a guilty worm, am now received in my Father's bosom; that I, a lost prodigal, am now feasting at his table with delight; that I, who once heard the voice of his anger, now listen to the notes of his love. This is joy—this is joy worth worlds. What more can they know up there than that? And were it not that

our sense of it were so imperfect, we might bring heaven down to earth, and might at least dwell in the suburbs of the celestial city, if we could not be privileged to go within the gates. So you see, again, we can have bunches of the grapes of Eshcol in that sense. Seeing that heaven is a state of acceptance, we, too, can know and feel that acceptance, and rejoice in it.

VI. And, again, heaven is A STATE OF GREAT AND GLORIOUS MANIFESTATIONS. You look forward to your experience in heaven, you sing,—

"Then shall I see, and hear, and know  
All I desired or wished below;  
and every power find a sweet employ  
In that eternal world of joy."

You are now looking at it darkly through a glass: there you shall see face to face Christ looks down on the Bible, and the Bible is his looking-glass. You look into it, and see the face of Christ as in a mirror darkly; but soon you shall look upon himself and see him face to face. You expect heaven as a place of peculiar manifestations. You believe that there he will unvail his face to you; that—

"Millions of years your wondering eyes  
Shall o'er your Saviour's beauties rove."

You are expecting to see his face, and never, never sin. You are longing to know the secrets of his heart. You believe that, in that day you shall see him as he is, and shall be like him in the world of spirits. Well, beloved, though Christ does not manifest himself to us as he does to the bright ones there, have not you and I had manifestations even while we have been in this vale of tears? Speak, beloved; let your heart speak; hast thou not had visions of Calvary; has not thy Master sometimes touched thy eyes with eye-salve, and let thee see him on his cross? Hast thou not said—

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,  
Which before the cross I spend,  
Life, and health, and peace possessing,  
From the sinner's dying Friend.  
Here I'd sit for ever viewing  
Mercy stream in streams of blood!  
Precious drops my soul bedewing,  
Plead and claim my peace with God"?

Have you not wept for joy and grief when you saw him bleeding out his life from his heart for you, and beheld him nailed to the tree for your sakes! O yes! I know you have had such manifestations of him. And have you not seen him in his risen glories? Have you not beheld him there exalted on his throne? Have you not by faith beheld him as the Judge of the quick and the dead, and as the Prince of the kings of the earth? Have you not looked through the dim future, and seen him with the crown of all the kingdoms on his head, with the diadems of all monarchies beneath his feet, and the scepters of all thrones in his hand? Have you not anticipated the moment of his most glorious triumphs, when—

"He shall reign from pole to pole,  
with illimitable sway"?

Yes, you have, and therein you have had foretastes of heaven. When Christ has thus revealed himself to you, you have looked within the vail, and, therefore, you have seen what is there, you have had some glimpses of Jesus while here; those glimpses of Jesus are but the beginning of what

shall never end. Those joyous melodies of praise and thanksgiving are but the preludes of the notes of Paradise.

VII. And now, lastly, the highest idea of heaven, perhaps, is that it is A PLACE OF MOST HALLOWED AND BLISSFUL COMMUNION. I have not given you near half that I might have given you of the various characteristics of heaven, as described in God's word, but communion is the best. Communion! that word so little spoken of, so seldom understood. That word, communion! Dearly, beloved, you hear us say, "And the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all;" but there are many of you that do not know the meaning of that sweet heaven in a word. Communion! It is the flower of language; it is the honeycomb of words. Communion! You like to talk of corruption best, do you not? Well, if you like that filthy word, you are very willing to meditate upon it. I do so when I am forced to do it; but communion seems to me to be a sweeter word than that. You like to talk a great deal about affliction, don't you? Well, if you love the black word—ah! you have reason to love it; but if you love to be happy upon it, you may do so; but give me for my constant text and for my constant joy, communion. And I will not choose which kind of communion it shall be. Sweet Master, if thou givest me communion with thee in thy sufferings, if I have to bear reproach and shame for thy name's sake, I will thank thee; if I may have fellowship with thee in it, and if thou wilt give me to suffer for thy sake, I will call it honor, that so I can be a partaker of thy sufferings, and if thou givest me sweet enjoyments, if thou dost raise me up and make me to sit in heavenly places in Christ, I will bless thee. I will bless thee for ascension communion—communion with Christ in his glories. Do you not say the same? And for communion with Christ in death. Have you died unto the world, as Christ did die unto himself? And then have you had communion with him in resurrection. Have you felt that you are raised to newness of life, even as was he? And have you had communion with him in ascension, so that you could know yourself to be an heir to a throne in Paradise? If so, you have had the best earnest you can receive of the joys of Paradise. To be in heaven is to lean one's head upon the breast of Jesus. You have done it on earth? Then you know what heaven is. To be in heaven is to talk with Jesus, to sit at his feet, to let our heart beat against his heart. If you have had that on earth, you have had some of the grapes of heaven.

Cherish, then, these foretastes, of whatever kind they may have been in your individual case. Differently constituted, you will all look at heaven in a different light. Keep your foretaste just as God has given it to you. He has given each of you some one; if you love it, it is most suitable to your own condition. Treasure it up; think much of it. Think more of your Master. For, remember, it is "Christ in you the hope of glory," after all, that is your only foretaste of heaven; and the more fully prepared shall you be for the bliss of the joyous ones in the land of the happy.