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SERMONS AND TRACTS OF JOHN GILL
THE CHRISTIAN'S DEATH, RESURRECTION AND FINAL
STATE IN HEAVEN

The Saints Desire After Heaven
and A Future State Of Happiness

HEBREWS 11:16

by John Gill

(London: George Keith, 1764)

Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth

— Psalm 60:4

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SERMON 86

THE SAINTS DESIRE AFTER HEAVEN AND A FUTURE STATE OF HAPPINESS ^{F1}

*Occasioned By The Death Of Mrs Elizabeth Gill.
Preached Oct. 21, 1764.*

~~8116~~ HEBREWS 11:16

But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.

The apostle begins this chapter, with a definition of faith, which he describes, as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen: and illustrates this definition, by instances and examples, in the patriarchs, both before and after the flood; and he first instances in Abel, the immediate offspring of the first man, who by faith offered up a more excellent sacrifice, than his brother Cain: he then proceeds to Enoch, who by faith, was translated, that he should not see death; and received a testimony from God, that he pleased him by his faith, he next goes on to Noah, the heir and preacher of the righteousness of faith: who being warned of God, of unseen things, by faith prepared an ark, for the saving of himself and family, from a flood threatened to drown the whole world. Abraham and his posterity are next taken notice of, on which instance, the apostle enlarges, and observes, that God called this good man from his native country, to go to another, he was afterwards to possess; and that he by faith obeyed and went forth, not knowing whither he went; and that he, with Isaac and Jacob, dwelt in tabernacles in it, and confessed themselves pilgrims and strangers; and though they had an opportunity of returning to the country from whence they came, were unmindful of it. Abraham never returned to it; and when he sent his servant to take from thence a wife for his son Isaac, he charged him not to lay himself under any obligation to bring his son thither, for both he and they had another and better country in view; but now they desire a better country, etc., which refers, not to the

time of the apostle's writing; for then they were in heaven, in this better country, but to the time when they dwelt in tabernacles in a strange land; when they confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims there, and shewed no regard to the country they came out of, their hearts being intent upon another and better country.

All this may be applied to any and every believer, in any and every period of time; they, as *Abraham*, are called from their native country, out of the world, and from the men of it, among whom they were born, and had their conversation in time pace, and are bid to be separate from them, and have no fellowship with them; are exhorted and encouraged to forsake their own people, and their father's house; and under the influence of divine grace, do leave all, and follow Christ, as the apostles did. And as the patriarchs dwelt in tabernacles on earth, so they dwell in bodies, called *houses of clay*, which have their foundation in the dust; *earthly houses of this tabernacle*; which are easily unpinned, and soon taken down and dissolved. The apostle *Peter* makes use of this metaphor, with respect to his own body:

I think it meet, says he, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle; ^{<6013>}2 Peter 1:13,14

And as the patriarchs confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth, so do those who are effectually called by the grace of God. They own themselves to be strangers and sojourners here as all their fathers were; that their state on earth is a state of pilgrimage, and their time in it, a time of sojourning, which they pass in fear: and hence the apostle *Peter* addresses such, and exhorts them, *as pilgrims and strangers, to abstain from fleshly lusts*, ^{<6011>}1 Peter 2:11. And these, though they have an opportunity of returning to their former state and manner of life; nor are temptations to it wanting from their carnal and unbelieving hearts; like the Israelites, who in a fit of unbelief, were for making themselves a captain, and returning to Egypt, and their carnal appetites, hankering after the provisions there; and from Satan, who endeavors to draw them back, by the snares and allurements of the world; yet notwithstanding, such are the impressions and influences of divine grace upon them, that they mind and favor spiritual and heavenly things, and are unmindful of their former country, and earthly things; and such is the power of divine grace, by which they are kept, that they

are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the foul, ~~SC10B~~ Hebrews 10:39.

They desire, seek after, and look for, a better, even an heavenly country, this world is not their home, their place of rest; here they have no continuing city, but they seek one to come, their citizenship is in heaven, and their hearts are there.

What I shall further do with these words, will be to observe the following things,

I. The saints' future state of happiness, as described by *a country, a better country, a heavenly one,* and by *a city prepared for them.*

II. Their particular regard unto it, they desire it, seek after it, and look for it; all which are expressed in the text and context.

III. The notice God takes of such persons, and what is said of him with respect to them; he is *not ashamed to be called their God;* and that for this reason, because *he has prepared for them a city.*

I. The saints' future happiness is described as, a country, a better country, an heavenly one, and by a city prepared. And on this I shall chiefly dwell, only say some few things to the other two observations.

1. *The saints' future happiness is described as, a country;* for so it is expressed without an epithet, in verse 14, *they that say such things, declare plainly, that they seek a country.* And so it may be called, both with respect to a country in general, and to the country and land of *Canaan* in particular.

(1.) To a country in general, which is large, ample, and spacious. It is indeed sometimes only called *an house, which is eternal in the heavens,* ~~CR11~~ 2 Corinthians 5:1. But then it is such a house, which consists of divers apartments, of *many mansions,* or dwelling-places, ~~GR12~~ John 14:2. Enow, for the many that are ordained to eternal life; for the many Christ came to give his life a ransom for; for the many for the remission of whole sins his blood was filed; for the many that are justified by his righteousness; and for the many sons that are adopted into the family of God, and are brought to glory. It is also called *a city,* as in the text, and in verse 10, which is an assemblage of houses, and which are fit for men of business, and of figure, and of fashion, and worth and dignity to dwell in; and such the saints are.

And at other times, it is called *a country*, as here and in verse 14. And frequently *a kingdom*, as being large and capacious, sufficient to contain all the saints that have been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end of it. It is sometimes represented as

a far country; a certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and return, ^{<2912>}Luke 19:12,

the nobleman is Christ, the *far country* he went into, is heaven; his going thither respects his ascension to heaven; his end in going, was to receive his mediatorial kingdom, more visibly and gloriously; for at his ascension he was made and declared Lord and Christ. And his return, designs his second coming, when he will call his servants to an account for the talents he has entrusted them with in his absence. Now heaven is called *a far country*; not only with respect to wicked men, to whom indeed, it is, and ever, will be a far country;

the rich man lift up his eyes in hell, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, ^{<263>}Luke 16:23,

but it is so, with respect to the saints, in their present state, which is a state of distance, and absence, and with respect to the views and prospects, which they have of this country here, and which are very distant ones:

thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off, ^{<2317>}Isaiah 33:17.

But they will not always be in a state of distance from it, they will be brought nearer it, and it is what they desire to be led into. *Thy spirit is good, says David*; good in his nature, person and offices, and a good guide; and therefore he adds, *lead me into the land of uprightness*, ^{<1430>}Psalms 143:10. So called because none but upright persons dwell there, such who are upright in heart and life, and have the uprightness of Christ, even his righteousness imputed to them. So *in the new heavens and in the new earth, dwelleth righteousness*, or righteous persons; and none but they; as no defiled persons shall enter into the new *Jerusalem: so neither shall the unrighteous inherit the kingdom of God*, the ultimate glory: see ^{<6083>}2 Peter 3:13; ^{<6217>}Revelation 21:27; ^{<4089>}1 Corinthians 6:9.

(2.) The future happiness of the saints, may be called *a country*, with respect to the land of *Canaan*, which was a type of it, that was *a land of promise*, as in verse 9, being promised to Abraham, and to his seed. And so

eternal life is the promise of God; and it is spoken of as if it was the only promise, being the grand and principal one; *this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life*, ^{<6125>}1 John 2:25; see ^{<5012>}James 1:12. And a very ancient promise it is; it was very early on the heart of God to bellow it, and he made promise of it as early,

in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot Be, promised, before the world began, ^{<5002>}Titus 1:2.

The land of *Canaan*, was a land of rest, it is sometimes called, *the Lord's rest*, because he gave it; and sometimes the rest of the children of *Israel*, because they enjoyed it, ^{<8311>}Hebrews 3:11,18; ^{<5012>}Deuteronomy 12:11. A rest from their travels in the wilderness, and from all their enemies about them, when entered into, and possessed by them; and *there remains a rest for the people of God*; a sabbatism, a spiritual rest here, and an eternal one hereafter; a rest from all toil and labors, sin and sorrow, diseases, distresses, afflictions and troubles of whatsoever sort. The land of *Canaan*, is said to be a good land, abounding with good things; *a land flowing with milk and honey*, a pleasant and desirable one, ^{<0108>}Exodus 3:8; ^{<0125>}Deuteronomy 3:25; ^{<0104>}Psalms 112:4. Heaven is a country where great goodness is laid up, not to be expressed; such good things that eye *hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of*; where there is plenty and satiety, no hunger nor thirst neither in a literal or spiritual sense; where there are *fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore*. The land of *Canaan* was ready prepared for the Israelites, was furnished with the accommodations and conveniences of life, without any pains, labor, or industry of theirs;

cities they built not houses they filled not, wells they dug not, and vineyards and olive trees they planted not, ^{<0110>}Deuteronomy 6:10,11.

Heaven is replete with all good things, and ready prepared for the saints, without any toil and labor of theirs; it is not obtained and possessed, by any *works of righteousness* done by them; not they that are of the law are heirs of this heavenly country: It is by promise and of grace; eternal life, is the free gift of God through Christ.

Once more, the land of *Canaan*, was divided by lot to the children of *Israel*, which was done by *Joshua*, when subdued by him, according to the commandment of God; and so is the heavenly inheritance; *in whom*, that is,

in Christ, lays the apostle, *we have obtained an inheritance by lot*, as the word used signifies, ^{<4011>}Ephesians 1:11. Not that the heavenly inheritance is carnal, uncertain and precarious, who shall enjoy it; for the elect of God, are most certainly predestinated to it, and shall possess it: nor that it is divided into certain parts and portions; for the whole inheritance lies among *the saints in light*, and is enjoyed by them all; but the sense is, that it is not at their option, or according to any merit of theirs, but according to the election of God, and his free, rich, sovereign grace in Christ.

2. *The saints' state of future happiness is described as, a better country; better than Mesopotamia, or Chaldea, from whence Abraham came; better than the land of Canaan, promised to him and his seed; and better than any country on the globe of the earth, or than the whole world itself.*

(1.) The goodness of a country lies much in its salubrious air, and temperate climate; in heaven, the *better country*, no noxious pestilentious vapors arise to infect the air; no hurtful lusts, that in danger and destroy the souls of men; no evil communications which corrupt good manners; no filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor any corrupt communications, proceed out of the mouths of the inhabitants of this better country; no filthy conversation of the wicked, to vex the souls of the righteous; every thing here breathes unspotted purity, and perfect holiness. No mists, nor fogs, nor clouds darkening the air, to interrupt the sight of pleasing objects, are here. Saints in their present state, it is sometimes with them a dark and cloudy day, the evidences of the truth of grace in them, and of their hope of eternal life and happiness, are much obscured; such mists arise, which intercept, the sight of their beloved; he is, withdrawn and is gone; they can neither see his face, nor hear his voice; clouds of sin interpose, and separate, between God and them: with respect to sensible communion, they walk in darkness. and see no light: but so it is not in the *better country*; it is all pure rather, an unclouded sky, it is as the morning, when the sun rideth; a *morning without clouds*; as clear shining after rain; the sun goes no more down by day, nor does the moon withdraw itself; the Lord is their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning are ended, no more darkness, but one bright, clear, perfect and everlasting day: no storms, no blistering winds, no hurricanes are heard or known in this better country. In the present life, saints are tossed with tempests, and not comforted. Christ is indeed *an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm* of divine wrath and vengeance; he is a rock, on which their souls are built; so that when rains descend, floods come, and winds blow, and beat upon

them, they stand safe and secure, because built upon the rock of ages; but though they are safe, yet those beating waves, and bellowing winds, of sin's rage, and Satan's temptations, and the world's persecutions, with other afflictions, give them great disturbance and distress: but in the *better country* all is smooth, serene and calm; no excessive heat, or pinching cold, are here, as in some climates, where the air is extremely hot, or severely cold; but here no pain is felt from the influence of a fiery law, working wrath, nor from the fiery darts of Satan, nor from the flaming sword of justice. The fun of persecution looks not on the saints here, they serve the Lord day and night without molestation, and neither sun nor heat smite them; but they are led continually by the pure cooling springs of grace, and purling streams of love, and *all tears are wiped from their eyes*. Here no dampings arise, from the prevalence of sin, nor from the cares of life, nor from too great a regard to earthly and worldly things, to chill their affections and devotions; no such thing is known here as coldness, lukewarmness and indifference in religious worship. Love, that abiding and permanent grace, glows with a divine warmth in every breast, and is at its height, in its vigor and full perfection.

(2.) The goodness of a country lies, as in the salubrity of its air, so in the fruitfulness of its soil: the *better country* is all a garden, a perfect paradise, it is called so ^{<4713>}2 Corinthians 12:4 and vastly exceeds the earthly paradise, or *Eden's garden*, that was undoubtedly a most fertile and delightful spot, set all around with fruit trees, and odoriferous plants; there were no thorns nor briars in it: these are the fruit of sin, and the effect of the curse pronounced on the earth for Adam's transgression;

cursed is the ground for thy sake, thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, ^{<0087>}Genesis 3:17,18.

Nor are there any thorns and briars, in a figurative sense, in the heavenly paradise, in the *better country*; there is *no pricking briar, nor grieving thorn* to the saints, in all that land of glory, ^{<3824>}Ezekiel 28:24, whether by these are meant, profane children of *Belial*, who are like thorns and briars, useless and unprofitable, noxious and hurtful, and only fit fuel for everlasting burnings: or carnal professors, hypocrites in *Zion*; neither the one nor the other of *these shall stand in judgment*, nor have a place in *the congregation of the righteous*, to give them any annoyance or whether incarnal corruptions, which are like the Canaanites, left in the land to be pricks in the eyes and thorns the sides of the Israelites, these are nor in that

land; or the temptations of Satan, since the thorn in the flesh, and *a messenger of Satan*, are put together. Neither he, nor these have any place in the heavenly country: that, as before observed, is all a paradise, where nothing grows that is hurtful and pernicious; if the church below is

an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits, camphire with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices,
<2013> Song of Solomon 4:13,14,

with what fruit-bearing trees, and aromatic plants, must the heavenly paradise be filled, *in the midst of which*, we are assured,

stands the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, and yielding its fruit every month? <6117> Revelation 2:7. and <6212> 22:2.

(3.) The goodness of a country lies in its riches, and, generally speaking, when a country is fruitful, it is rich; the fruitfulness of its soil makes the inhabitants of it rich; as we read of riches of grace, so of riches of glory; which far surpasses all earthly riches; the riches of this world are uncertain riches, here today, and gone tomorrow, they make themselves wings and flee away; but the riches of the *better country* are certain and sure, solid and substantial, lasting and durable; a treasure which moth cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal away; they are unsearchable riches, it cannot be said how much and how great they are; however, saints know in themselves that they have in heaven *a better, and a more enduring substance* than what can be enjoyed on earth, <8134> Hebrews 10:34.

(4.) What gives the heavenly country the preference to all others is, the peaceableness of it; *God makes peace in his high places*, in the higher heavens, where his saints and angels dwell, <6212> John 25:2, which may, with great propriety, be called *the land of peace*, as the phrase is in <2115> Jeremiah 12:5. In this world there is seldom peace long, war is commonly in one part of it or another; and as soon peace is made, we quickly hear of rumors of war again; and with respect to the flare of men on earth, inn moral and spiritual sense, this life is a warfare: *Is there not a warfare to man on earth?* as the words may be rendered in <1001> Job 7:1. There is, and especially to the saints, and people of God.; they have many enemies to war with, the world, the flesh and the devil: *without are fightings and within are fears*, <4005> 2 Corinthians 7:5, yea, they have sightings both within and without; without, with the world and the devil; and within with the corruptions of

their nature, their worst enemies; there is nothing to be seen in the Shulamite, the most perfect, and the most peaceable believer, as the word may signify, but as *it were the company of two armies*, set in battle array, and combating each other, ²¹⁶³Song of Solomon 6:13, even *the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh*; the law in the members, warring against the law in the mind: but when this life is ended, the warfare is accomplished; no more war, all peace; the end of the perfect and upright man is peace; he enters into peace, eternal, peace, which will never be interrupted.

(5.) Another superior excellency of this heavenly country, and which makes it better than any other, is the safety of it; there is *nothing hurts nor destroys in all this holy mountain*, this holy land; there is no danger from any quarter, not from thieves and robbers, nor from beasts of prey; there is no insidious serpent, nor roaring lion here; there was a serpent in *Eden's* garden, and a subtle one, which reduced our first parents to their ruin; and by whom the saints in this life are in danger of being beguiled, when permitted; and by whom the nations of the world are deceived; but he has no place in the *better country*; the *Old Serpent the devil* is cast out of heaven, and fell like lightening from thence; and his place will be found no more there; on the earth he *goes about like a roaring lion, flaking whom he may devour*; he is permitted to take his walks to and fro, in the world below, but he is not admitted to take any in that above;

no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; it shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there,
²³⁵⁹Isaiah 35:9,

that is, shall walk in the greatest safety, having nothing to fear from any quarter whatever.

(6.) What infinitely adds to the preference of this country to all others is, the better company in it; here are not only *the spirits of just men made perfect*, who converse with each other in the most heavenly and spiritual manner, and join in songs or praise, and hallelujahs to the Lamb, and *an innumerable company of angels, those shining forms*, attending and waiting on them, and joining with them, in social acts of worship; but what is ten thousand times more than all the rest, there is had an uninterrupted communion with God, Father, Son and Spirit; here God is *all and in all*; here saints behold God in Christ as he is; behold his glory, appear in glory with him, see him as he is, become like him, and are for ever with him.

3. *The saints' future state of happiness, is described by its being a country; which is explained an heavenly one, a country which lies in heaven, as we say of such a country, it is in Europe; of another, that it is in Asia; and of a third, that it is in Africa, and so of a fourth, that it is in America; but of this country, it must be said, that it is in heaven; when it is spoken of as an house, it is*

an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,
<451> 2 Corinthians 5:11.

When as a city, a city in heaven; *our citizenship is in heaven,*
<410> Philippians 3:20, and so of course the city we are citizens of must be there; when said to be *an inheritance*, it is *an inheritance reserved in heaven,* <4100> 1 Peter 1:4, when it goes by the name of a country, or a kingdom, it is called *the kingdom of heaven,* <4150> Matthew 5:20, and indeed this country is no other than heaven itself, and in which all desirable persons and things are; here is our covenant God and Father, whom we are directed to address, laying, *Our father which art in heaven;* and of whom it may be truly said, with the Psalmist,

whom have I in heaven but, thee? and there is none on earth that I
 desire besides thee, <4935> Psalm 73:25,

here also Jesus is at the right hand of his divine Father, our head, and husband, brother, friend, redeemer and savior: Here is our treasure, portion and inheritance, and where our hearts should be; and no wonder it is, that this *better country* should be desired, and especially, since it is of an heavenly nature, and so suited to heaven-born souls; as is the heavenly, so are they that are heavenly; and they are such, that are *born again*, or *born from above*, as the phrase may be rendered in <4100> John 3:3, they are partakers of the divine nature, that is, of an heavenly one, that bears some resemblance to the nature of God in heaven; they are partakers of the heavenly calling, and are called to enjoy *an heavenly country*, which is agreeable to their nature, as spiritual; an earthly country is not, they cannot breathe in it, at least not freely.

4. *The happiness of the saints in another world is described as, a city, both in this verse and in verse 10, where it is said to be a city which hath foundations;* it is expressed in the plural number, for it seems it has more foundations than one; there is the everlasting love of God, the source and spring both of grace and glory, and the electing grace of God in Christ, the

foundation of God, which stands sure, sealed with this seal, *The Lord knows them that are his*; and the covenant, of grace, which is *ordered in all things, and sure*; and there is Christ the *sure foundation of God's* laying; and who is also *the foundation of the apostles and prophets*; of their laying ministerially; wherefore the new *Jerusalem* is said to have twelve foundations, because Christ, the one and only foundation, is said by his twelve apostles. The plural expressed in the text referred to, is opposed to tents and tabernacles, which had no foundations, but were easily taken down, and moved from place to place; and denotes the firmness and stability of this *continuing city*, ^{<3134>} Hebrews 13:14. And let it not be thought that this is a diminutive and lowering expression; that after the apostle had called the future state of the saints happiness *a country, a better*, and an *heavenly one*, that he calls it *a city*; for as in every kingdom and country there is a chief city, the metropolis of the country, the residence of the king of it, where he has his palace, keeps his court, and his nobles dwell such is this city, not only *whose builder and maker is God*, who built all things; and is made, not with the hands of men, but of God himself; but also the *city of the great King*, and is fit for kings and princes to dwell in, as all the saints are, What the Assyrian monarch boastingly said, *Are not my princes altogether kings?* ^{<3108>} Isaiah 10:8, is true of all Jehovah's princes, his saints, they are all made kings, as well as priests unto God, by Christ's and so have a city prepared for them to dwell in, according to their high birth, quality and dignity; and what a city that is may be learned, in some measure, from the grand description given of the new *Jerusalem*, by its being, even the streets of it of pure gold; and by its, walls and gates of pearl: and yet these brilliant views fall abundantly short of setting forth the real grandeur of it, ^{<6210>} Revelation 21:10. Thus I have gone through the description of the saints' future happiness; I shall only say a few things to the other two remaining observations, as I proposed.

II. The regard the saints in their present state have unto their future happiness; they now desire it, seek after it, and look for it.

1. *They desire it*, which supposes they have some knowledge of it, for there is no desire after what is unknown; and a person may have some knowledge of a country he has never been in, by the relations of persons that have been there, by seeing it described in a map, and by having some of the produce and fruits of it brought unto him; by which he can in some measure form a judgment of it; so the Israelites knew before they entered into the land of *Canaan*, what sort of a country it was, partly by the

description God had given of it, as *a land flowing with milk and honey*; and partly, by the report of the spies that went to view it, as well as by the cluster of grapes, figs and pomegranates, they brought with them from thence; thus the people of God know somewhat of the *heavenly* country, not only by the ministry of the word, and by the description of it in the map of the scriptures, but by their own experience, by the foretastes they have of the fruit of that land, and by the prospects, though distant ones, they have of it; their hope entering within the veil, and their faith looking to and being *the evidence of things not seen*. Hence they have ardent desires after it; the word here used, signifies a very vehement desire, such an one as that they are willing: to be *absent from the body, that they may be present with the Lord* in this country; they choose rather to depart out of this world, the country they now dwell in, that they may be with Christ in the better country.

2. *They seek after this country*, so it is expressed in verse 14, *they that say such things, declare plainly, that they seek a country*; and so in chapter 13:14, *we seek one to come*, a continuing city; they seek for it, in the first place, as soon as ever they are called and converted; and they seek it earnestly, diligently, and with all their hearts: and they seek it in a right way: not to obtain it by *works of righteousness* done by them; such as seek it in this way find it not. The Jews fought, but did not obtain, because they sought not by faith, but, as it were, by *the works of the law*: for except a man's *righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and pharisees, he shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven*, or that better country, the heavenly one: those, that seek right, seek not only the kingdom of God in the first place, but *his righteousness* also; or seek for the kingdom of God, the heavenly glory, in and by the righteousness of Christ, which only entitles to it. Such as are justified freely through the grace of God by the righteousness of Christ, become heirs, according to the hope of eternal life, ~~408~~Matthew 5:20; ~~507~~Titus 3:7.

3. *The saints look for this better country and heavenly city*, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did, verse 10, they looked for it by faith. Faith is often expressed by *looking*, not only when it has Christ for its object, but also eternal happiness, then it is called, looking for *a city which hath foundations*, looking for *the blessed hope*, and looking for *the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*, unto eternal life. Saints not only believe there is such a state of happiness, but that it is for them; and therefore they expect it, and wait for it:

we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith,
 <REF>Galatians 5:5.

III. The notice God takes of such persons, that desire, seek, and look for a future state of happiness, He is not ashamed to be called their God:

For God to be called the God of his people, is the great blessing of the covenant; which runs thus,

I will be their God, and they shall be my people, <REF>Jeremiah 32:38,

and happy are the people that are in such a relation to God, their happiness is not to be expressed; other persons may be happy in a temporal sense, who enjoy much of the things of this world, but thrice happy, infinitely so, are they whose God is the Lord. I shall not enter into the consideration of this wonderful blessing of grace, this would open a large field of discourse. I shall only take notice of the phrase used of God, that he is not *ashamed* to be called the God of his people; it is a very remarkable and unusual one; it stands between two clauses in the text, and has an aspect upon, and is in connection with them both, with the words that go before, *but now they desire a better country*, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God, etc., *because the patriarchs spoken of were so very desirous of, so earnestly seeking after, and so wishfully looking for a state of happiness in another world; therefore God was not ashamed to own them*, even in so near a relation to him as they to be his people, and he to be their God: had they been the grovelings of this world, had they minded only earth, and earthly things, and sought for and desired nothing else but the land of *Canaan*, and the temporal blessings of it; God, speaking after the manner of men, would have been ashamed to be called the *God* of such persons; he would not have owned, but have disclaimed the relation; but now, since their heaven-born souls were breathing after a future state of immortality and bliss, and aspiring to the heavenly regions, where they hoped to enjoy God to all eternity; therefore he was not ashamed to be called *their God*; but calls himself so, as to *Moses*, at the bush;

I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,
 <REF>Exodus 3:6,

A like phrase is used of Christ in this epistle, <REF>chapter 2:11, *for both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one*: of one nature, in one covenant, partakers of the same grace, though not to the same degree; and particularly, the one being the sanctifier, and the other the

sanctified, and though both, holy: *For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren*, as it is intimated he would be, had they not been one with him, and sanctified by him. In like manner, though God is the high and lofty One, whose throne is in the heaven, and the earth his footstool, yet he disdains not to look unto, and to dwell with, *the holy, humble, and contrite soul*, ^{<25715>} Isaiah 57:15, and ^{<2311>} chapter 66:1,2. Moreover these words stand in connection with the following; *for he hath prepared for them a city; which is a reason proving, that he is not ashamed to be called their God;* and it is suggested, had he not done this, humanly speaking, he should have been ashamed of being called, and accounted their God; as particularly, the *God of Abraham*. This good man God called out of his native country, and his father's house, to go and dwell in a strange land, and as a pilgrim and a traveler in it: it is true, indeed, he promised to give it to him, and his posterity, for an inheritance; but to him, personally, he did not give so much as a foot of ground in it, as *Stephen* says, ^{<4116>} Acts 7:5. Now if God had made no better provision for Abraham than this, he would have been ashamed to have been called his God; but he prepared *a city*, and provided *a better country* than *Canaan* for him: and this *Abraham* knew, believed, looked for, and expected, and died in the faith of; and therefore God was not ashamed to be called his God; and how many poor saints are there, whom God has called effectually by his grace from among the men of the world, who have scarce clothes to cover their naked bodies, scanty provisions of food, and that mean and coarse, to satisfy their craving appetites, and mean habitations to dwell in: now if God made no better provision for these persons, whom he thus calls, he would, speaking after the manner of men, be ashamed to be called their God: but lo! though they are the *poor of this world*, yet they are *rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*: for these poor ragged saints, that fare hard, and dwell in lowly cottages here, he has prepared *a city*, fit for kings and princes to dwell in, with plenty of all things, grand and pleasing, suitable thereunto: He takes these beggars from the dunghill, and sets them among princes, and causes them to inherit the throne of glory; and therefore he is not ashamed to be called their God: but on the contrary exults, rejoices, glories in it, that he is their God; and shows himself to be glorious as their covenant-God, by making such a munificent preparation and provision for his covenant-people: for the words are what *Rhetoricians* call a *Mimesis*, by which less is expressed than is designed. The *city* prepared, is the same with the *better country*, as before explained, even the future happiness of the saints in heaven; and this is of God's preparing, and of his only, and is given to none

but those, *for whom*, says Christ, *it is prepared of my Father*. And it is a *kingdom prepared by him* in his eternal purposes and decrees, *from the foundation of the world*; see ^{<412>}Matthew 20:23 and 25:34. And the chosen vessels of mercy are afore prepared for this glory; and in time are made meet and ready for it, through the righteousness of Christ put upon them, and by his Spirit and grace in them; and Christ he is gone to prepare a place in this city, in this better country, by his presence and prevalent intercession, for every one of his people, and will come again and take them to himself, *that where he is, they may be also*, ^{<542>}John 14:2,3.

I shall close all with a word or two. *What has been said may serve to wean us from this world*, and draw off our hearts from it, and cause us to sit loose unto it, and all things in it; since this is not our rest, our house, our home, our native place; that is in another country; *And this may be of use to quicken our desires after another world*, to seek a better country, and look for it; *And this may also point out to us the happiness of those that are gone before us*, they have in this better country, and are in better company. But I forbear laying any more —. ^{f2}

FOOTNOTES

^{ft1} This Sermon was preached by the Doctor, the first time of his appearing in public, after the decease of his beloved wife, Mrs ELIZABETH GILL, who departed this Life, October 10, 1764, in the 68th Year of her Age.

^{ft2} The following character was wrote by the Doctor and found among his papers, though not delivered from the pulpit.

It pleased God to call her by his grace in the early time of life, and in a place of great darkness and ignorance; where there were scarce any, or very few professors of religion; so that when she took up a profession of it, she appeared very singular, and became the object of the scoffs and jeers of her neighbors and former acquaintance; but this did not deter her from pursuing the good ways of God she had entered into, and from persisting in them. She soon drank in the doctrines of the free grace of God in the salvation of men by Christ, of which she had a comfortable experience.

In the after-time of her life, her afflictions and troubles were many, but under all she was favored with divine supports, and was frequently indulged with gracious words of promise on different occasions, and yet often doubting and fearing: for none could have meaner and more humble thoughts of themselves than (he always had) looking upon herself as *less than the least of all saints*.

Lord's days were usually delightful to her; she often met with refreshings from the presence of God in them; which made her earnestly desire the return of them; and when the day drew nigh, longed until the morning was, and the time came to attend public worship. The loss of these precious opportunities, through her long confinement, was greatly lamented by her.

She was one that truly feared God, and was ever desirous of having a conscience void of offense both towards God and man, and of doing her duty to both; careful as much as in her lay to give no offense by word or deed, to the world or to the church of God; studying the things which make for peace among all with whom she was concerned; as her whole deportment, for the space of between forty and fifty years, has abundantly shown, of which many have are witnesses.

Her last affliction, though long, tedious and painful, was borne with the greatest patience; that passage of scripture was truly verified in her, *Tribulation works patience*; and though she was not *carried out*, as her expression was, which she observed some were on their dying beds, in raptures of joy and strong expressions of faith, yet it pleased God to drop comfort: into her soul at certain times; and sometimes she would be longing to be at home in her Father's house, laying, "*Let me go, O let me go to my Father's house:*" repeating it over and over again.

The scripture which has now been discoursed on, was expressed by her as it had been at times before, with great pleasure and delight; and also those words, *them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*. In a view of her own soul-affairs, and those of her family, those words appeared to be of considerable use, and were quieting and comfortable to her, *casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you*.

But a few Lord's days ago, as her surviving relative was taking his leave of her, coming hither to preach, she expressed the following words with strong application to herself, *having made peace*