

## The Future State – A Self-Conscious State

“Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” – I Corinthians 13:12

THE APOSTLE PAUL made this statement with reference to the blessedness of the believer in eternity. Such statements are frequent in the Scriptures. We find in I Corinthians 2:9, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” Again in I John 3:2, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” And again in I Peter 1:4, “To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

The born-again believer endures as seeing that which is invisible, and by faith has the indwelling hope that through the redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ, his eternity will be a condition of peace and purity, and that he shall know even as also he is known.

However, it is not the redeemed ones alone who are to enter eternity, but *every* soul outside of Christ must also face eternity to know as they are known. In Luke 16 we have the story of the rich man and Lazarus—“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments” (v 22). God’s Word plainly declares: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27). The soul that dies outside of Christ will be known for eternity even as he is known.

Death carries a man over and into a *new and entirely different existence* than he has ever known. Here in this life he knows in part, and such a little part, but in eternity he shall know by direct observation. Man cannot acquire the knowledge now that he will have when he passes out of this life into the next. What a sudden and complete change it will be. A Hottentot out of the heart of Africa merely by dying, passing from time into eternity, acquires a knowledge that is absolutely inaccessible to the wisest man here on earth.

The future state is the *final* state, therefore, all questions are settled and all doubts are resolved. There will be no arguing then as to whether the Bible is the Word of God, for then you shall know of a certainty that it is God’s Word, and that the threatenings of His Word, as well as the promises, will be carried out by Him who sits upon the throne—He who is sovereign and works everything after the counsel of His own will. All your arguments as to whether or not there is a hell will be over, for you will find that the soul who dies outside of Christ must live forever beneath the wrath of a sin-avenging God. You will also find that the soul who sins shall come beneath the curse of a righteous sin-hating God. All your questions about eternal matters, and your debating as to whether or not God is too loving to punish sinners, will be answered then without any argument, for then you shall know even as you are known.

The future state is a *conscious* state, for our text says, “Then shall I know even as also I am known.” It is a world of knowledge, of conscious knowledge. The human spirit, be it holy or sinful, friend or enemy of God, in eternity will always and for ever be aware of its condition. If it be made holy in Christ, washed in His precious blood, redeemed by His marvellous grace, it shall always be conscious of the fact. If it be sinful, unrepenting, God-hating, it cannot for an instant lose the distressing consciousness of sin. Therefore, the blessing is unceasing in heaven and the misery unceasing in hell. “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Rev 22:11). He that is righteous is righteous still and knows it continually; he that is filthy is filthy still and knows it continually.

If we enter eternity as the redeemed of the Lord, there shall be no change, for the same knowledge and experience that we have had here in part, we shall have there in completeness and perfection. *Heaven begins on earth*. Here God’s people learn to hate sin and to love holiness through the work of God’s grace by the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit works effectually in our hearts, we come to abhor that which God abhors: our sinful will, our sinful ways and the plague of our heart—our damnable sin nature. That which we long for, to

be like Him, we shall one day be. We learn to know somewhat of these things while here on earth, and praise the Lord, we shall one day know as we are known. If you enter into eternity without Christ, the same will be true. You shall know even as you are known. There you will know clearly and accurately your own unfit heart. You shall know then that the wages of sin is death. Because you did not like to retain God in your knowledge, and you did not want God's holiness, because you hated it, you shall know it then without the capacity to love it. That which you hate in part here, God and His holiness, shall become full fruitage then; you shall know your own heart even as you have been known of God.

If the most thoughtless individual could only have a clear understanding of the kind of knowledge which is awaiting on the other side of the tomb, he would become the most thoughtful and most anxious of men. It would sober like death itself. If you, my unpardoned man, should be haunted from this moment on with the thought, "When I die, I shall enter into the light of God's countenance and obtain a knowledge of my own character that will be as accurate and unvarying as God Himself has upon the subject," you would find no rest until you had obtained an assurance of the Divine mercy which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. You would want to know with all the assurance that God the Holy Spirit could give you from His Word that you were in Christ, and that you had found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

But here lies the trouble: *the natural man looks on the future state as being like this one*, and therefore judges eternity by time. You feel that there is nothing to be concerned about, "for if God has not cut me off now, He will not cut me off in eternity." But, my friend, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal 6:7,8). You think because God has kept silent that He is altogether such an one as yourself, but He will reprove you and set everything in order before your own eyes in eternity. There you shall know even as you are known.

*The human mind in eternity will have a distinct and unvarying knowledge of the character of God.* The one particular attribute that you will know above all is His holiness, His Divine holiness. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab 1:13). "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet 1:16). *God is holy. God hates sin.* His holiness and hatred for sin, like every attribute of His, is living, active and must manifest itself. His holy wrath must strike at sin. What an awful day it will be when the unsaved soul is ushered into His Divine presence for eternity to be encircled by a holy and a just God whom he hates! Your cry will be like the cry of those in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation, "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

*Your future state outside of Christ will be an open and unavoidable view of God.* You will never be able to look in any direction in eternity without beholding the One whom you hate, and that One, a holy and a just God. Because you hate holiness and love sin, you will gaze at Him and gnaw your tongue for pain, and there will be no repentance in your heart, for there can be no repentance in hell. "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they *repented not* to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they *gnawed their tongues for pain*, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and *repented not of their deeds*" (Rev 16:8-11). Oh, what an awful day it will be to you who die out of Christ when you are ushered into the presence of God and made to look upon Him whom you loathe and hate; you will be miserable forever, as you are made to look for the first time, upon your own heart which you will know to be deceitful above all things and incurably wicked, but then it will be too late.

On the other hand, those who love the Lord and have come to say like David, “We give thanks and rejoice at the remembrance of thy holiness,” shall gaze upon Him and adore Him for His unspeakable Gift, the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us.

There is no darkness in which you can hide yourself when you leave this world of shadows. Ignorance cannot protect you from future misery. Indifference and carelessness about the future life will not protect your soul from future misery. You who simply neglect to prepare yourself to meet a holy God, though you believe that there is such a Being, will find that you are not able to endure this Holy One any more than the atheist or the skeptic. Only those who have come to rest in Christ and have been given a new heart which loves holiness will be protected from future misery. The nature and character of God cannot be altered; therefore, the change must be wrought in man’s heart. A love of holiness must begin down here. Have you ever been brought to see the holiness of God over against your unholiness? Have you ever been made to see His holy righteousness over against your sinfulness? Oh, pray that the Lord will show you yourself, then that He may show you Himself!

*Do not comfort yourself with the thought that there will be a second chance after death*, or that there is an intermediate place between heaven and hell where your soul can suffer a little while and then go into heaven. Do not comfort yourself with the thought that someone could pray your soul out of hell. This doctrine, as the world loves to believe it to be comforting, is not taught in God’s Word. This is one of the many lies that your father, the devil, has taught you. God’s Word plainly declares that for the believer to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and this immediately after death. To the unbeliever, the Word plainly declares that in hell he lifts up his eyes, being in torment, and this immediately after death.

Do not comfort yourself with the thoughts that just because some preacher or priest says some nice and wonderful things about you after you are dead, that all will be well, for Galatians 2:6 tells us, “God accepteth no man’s person.” And again, “For there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom 2:11). Remember this one thing, and never forget it, “Salvation is of the LORD”; salvation is knowing the Lord Jesus Christ in the forgiveness of your sins, and the justifying of your soul. To know Christ is, first, to know yourself to be a lost, hell-deserving sinner, and for God the Holy Spirit to work in you that inward work of regeneration whereby you come to feel and acknowledge your awful, sinful condition before a holy God. You are brought down at the feet of the Lord in repentance whereby you are made to sorrow for sin, your sin, because it is against the Holy Being whom you have rebelled against. You are made to mourn over it, to turn to God from it, to loathe it, to hate it, and cry unto God for its power to be broken in your heart and life. When you are brought here by the Holy Spirit, He will also give faith to lay hold of the Lord Jesus Christ as God’s only Remedy for your sins. Then when Christ is revealed to your heart, you are ever thankful and grateful that He, in love to your soul, delivered you from the pit of corruption.

Be not deceived. Christ *only* is the sinner’s salvation and God will accept only the work of the Lord Jesus Christ for the full payment of your sin-debt. Justice demands blood, and it is only God’s blood shed for sinners in the person of His Son, that justice will accept. The only thing that you and I as poor sinners can bring to God which He will accept, is the precious blood of Christ. “No price in my hands I bring, but simply to Thy cross I cling.”

*In eternity a man will know himself even as he is known of God.* The instant that anyone obtains a clear view of the holy nature of his Maker, he obtains a clear view of his own sinful nature. Isaiah experienced this: “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple...Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa 6). Yes, in eternity man will see sin to be the odious and abominable thing that it is; it is contrary to the holy nature of God. It will be God’s holiness shining into your heart which will reveal your own sinful heart and nature even as it did Isaiah’s heart when God saved him. That which happened to Isaiah happens to every man, either in time or in eternity. I praise the Lord that He opened my heart in time, first, by letting me see

the holiness of my God, and my far distance from Him. Then I was enabled to see the sinfulness of my own heart, and I was brought by the Holy Spirit to Christ for deliverance and salvation.

Man is afraid of his own heart and will not come to the light that his deeds may be reproved. But one day you must come, and at death you will surely come into the presence of a holy God. Then, how will you stand?

*The principle source and seat of future torment will be the sinner's sin.* There is no suffering inflicted hereafter upon anything but sin, unrepented sin. In eternity, self-knowledge will be pure, living torment. Yet this misery will spring entirely out of the sin within your own heart. The soul out of Christ will suffer in the future world only as a sinner, and because he is a sinner. There will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth only because the sinful creature will be compelled to look at himself, and to know his sin in the same manner that it is known by the infinite Holy One.

*God must punish sin.* Is there any injustice in this? If a sinful being cannot bear the sight of himself, would you have the Holy One step in between him and his sins so that he should not see them, and so that he might be happy in them? Away with such folly and such wickedness, for it is the height of wickedness to desire that some method should be invented and introduced into the universe of God, whereby the wages of sin shall be life and joy, and a sinner can look into his own wicked heart and be happy. You who think that God should pass over your sins without you turning from them, and without a heartfelt repentance over them—you forget who God is and what you are. God is a holy being, of purer eyes than to behold evil; you are a rebel against His government, against His Person, and against everything that is Godlike. Your attitude has always been the same as Pharaoh's, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice?" (Exo 5:2).

*In eternity you will have a clear understanding of the nature and wants of your soul.* You need God, but you are alienated from Him; you are an enemy in your mind by wicked works against Him. Oh, that the Spirit of the living God would show you your need of Him this hour because when you wake up in eternity, it will be too late! Then you will not be able to find His help! As long as you live upon the earth, you find a sort of substitute for God, but in eternity, you will be deprived of all your substitutes; all the things you trusted in and loved will be gone; and when you reach out to find something to trust in and love, you will find only God, for God fills eternity. He inhabits eternity. That is where your misery will begin; for you have no heart to love God while you are here on earth, and there is no other being and no other thing in eternity to love. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa 57:15).

You who do not get a new heart while on earth to love God, will not find one in eternity. Oh, what an awful day it will be when you are suddenly thrust into the presence of a thrice-holy God, without having had Christ revealed to your heart, and God's Divine nature planted within; you will have no capacity to love Him who fills eternity.

Will you not use the power of self-knowledge that you possess? You cannot ultimately escape from using it. You cannot forever flee from your own presence. You must one day face reality, either in time or eternity. You must face the fact that you are a sinful soul, you are possessed with an undying soul, you have sinned against a thrice-holy God, and God is going to require your sins at your hands. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee" (Psa 139:7-12).

Take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, you must sooner or later come to know yourself. Either be acquitted in the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is God's Substitute for sinners, or condemn yourself, and that throughout eternity. God will not condemn you in eternity. You will

condemn yourself, for His holiness will only reveal your sinfulness, and then your own heart will condemn you. As the man found at the wedding feast without a garment was speechless, so will you be speechless. There will be no arguing with God, for you will know even as you are known, and you will condemn yourself. You will have no one to blame but yourself. That is what happens when the Holy Spirit brings a sinner to repentance here. That soul, as he stands in the light of God's holiness, sees his sinfulness and condemns himself. He does not argue with God; he does not try to offer excuses to God, but acknowledges that God is right, that he is wrong, and that if he receives justice, God would send him to hell.

*Self-inspection and self-knowledge will come. These are inevitable!* In eternity it will be day after day, week after week, year after year, millennium after millennium, yea, for eternity; because of your hard and impenitent heart you would not have self-inspection and self-knowledge in the day of grace. You do not know that you are treasuring up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God who will render to every man according to his deeds.

Oh, that today you would cry as the publican in the temple, "God, be merciful to me a sinner"; oh, that today you would flee to Christ, who is the City of Refuge, casting your poor, sinful soul upon Him who alone has borne the wrath of a sin-avenging God upon sin. May the Lord cause this self-inspection and this self-knowledge to begin even *now*, that in the day when you shall know even as you are known, you will be able to endure the sight of God's holiness. For in Christ Jesus, sinners are brought to love His holy character, adore it, and praise God for it—in time.