

SERMON CXLV.

THAT the Happiness of Believers then will be, *That they shall be Openly Acknowledged and Acquitted.* Under these two is comprized the whole of that Felicity which derives to them from and by the Transaction of that Day, during the management of it. The Acknowledgment shall be full, the Acquittance perfect. And all this shall be done Openly, in the presence of Angels, Men and Devils, and that by Christ Himself the Great Judge. But I shall not treat of these two distinctly, but give a brief account of the Management of that whole Affair, as it respects Christ's Redeemed; in which their glorious Felicity will be discovered. And this may be reduced unto Three Heads, viz. *The Manner of their being brought into the Judgment; The Process with them in the Judgment; The Honour that shall be put upon them during the Process of the Judgment upon the Wicked.* Of these in order.

1. *THE Manner of their being brought into the Judgment.* There will be something preparatory, in the Morning of that Day, in which their Happiness will be made wonderfully to appear. Their very coming to their Judgment will be with such Circumstances, as will give them the greatest Satisfaction. For.

1. *THEY shall not come thither in the Quality of Persons Accused and Arraigned:* As such who have Crimes laid to their Charge, and are for the present under Suspicion, and so stand as Prisoners at the Bar, till their innocence be vindicated, and they be openly discharged. Among Men Persons are not wont to be brought upon their Trial, but upon some Accusation, or presumption of great Suspicion; who, tho' Innocent, do yet for that reason count it a Priviledge to clear their Names before Court and Country: And having made their Integrity to appear, do come off with Honour; till when there is a reproach or infamy lying upon them: And they are brought either from Prison or Bail, stand forth as Criminals, are Indicted as such, and put upon making their Plea. There will be no such thing with regard to the Godly then; nor will there any token of disgrace or disrespect be put upon them. But, * B b b 2.

2. *THEY shall be brought to the Tribunal with all the Badges of Honour and Favour put upon them.* They shall so appear there, as to know themselves, and be known by all the World, to be the Redeemed of Christ, and Heirs of Eternal Glory. Indeed, they were under a Vail when in this Life, and Men did not know them to be such Persons; yea, and often they Doubted about themselves; But now all will be put beyond Doubt. We are therefore told, *That they shall appear with joy,* Jud. 24. *And with Confidence,* 1 Joh. 2. 28. They shall come before the Judgment Seat after a Triumphant manner. And here there are more especially these Things to be taken notice of,

(1.) *THE Glorious Change which passeth on their Bodies at the Resurrection, belongs to this Preparation.* What this is, both with respect to those who shall then be raised, and them that shall then be found alive, we have already taken notice of. These are not Prison-Garments, that are then put upon them, but Robes of Glory. The very Dress that Christ's Spouse shall then be put into, will sufficiently demonstrate the good and joyful Day they are then like to have of it. All will be Caelestial; and that will be a witness that they are bound for Heaven.

(2.) *THE perfected Soul that is re-united to its Body in order to this Judgment, is already secure of its own Glory.* It hath had a particular Judgment already, and been in possession of perfect Happiness, ever since it left its Body. It comes from Heaven, where it hath been entertained by Christ, and filled with his Presence, and made to drink of the Rivers of his Pleasures. It well knows the Sentence it once received, can never be reversed, and that it comes now, only to have it openly declared: That its Appearance is only to add State to the Majesty of that Sentence, and cause all the World to understand what was before done, without their privy. And what an Happiness is this?

(3.) *ALL these shall be caught up into the Air to meet the Great Judge at his Coming.* There will be before-hand a Separation made between the Godly and the Wicked, Mat. 25. 32. And therein there will be a manifestation, to which Company each one belongs. And one thing attending of this Separation, is, that the Godly shall go up to meet Jesus Christ, in his Descent, and return with him in his royal Retinue, whiles the Wicked shall be left below, tremblingly expecting his coming. This we are acquainted with, 1 Thes. 4. 15, 16. *For thus we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.* And this will be a glorious Meeting, where all of them, arrayed with Garments of Light, shall fill up the Train of Heavenly Angels, and give their Attendance upon their Saviour. Oh! the happy Interviews, that there will be, when these blessed

ones shall come into his Presence on the Way, and be accosted with his Smiles and Embraces? How full of Heavenly Comfort will it make them? And then to come along with him, as his Friends, Favourites, and Attendants, will be a wonderful Consolation, and infallible Prefage of their good speed. He is therefore said *to come with them,* Jud. 14.

(4.) *WHEN the Judge is seated upon his Throne, these will be placed at his right Hand.* Mat. 25. 33. This is another observable Separation which shall then be made between these and the Wicked, who are to stand on his left Hand. The one whereof is for a note of Honour, the other, of Disgrace; the one a signal of their good Estate, and the other a prognostick of their miserable Exit. Our Saviour useth these Expressions, after the manner of Men, to shew what Notice will be taken of these, before the Process of the Judgment be made; signifying how full of Joy and Delight they shall be, from the very Place they shall occupy, and what a comfortable Omen it will be of the most happy Conclusion.

2. *THE Process with them in the Judgment.* Herein also they shall be very happy: and a wonderful Honour will be done them in it. This is set forth by our Saviour Christ in that Sentence which will then be pronounced upon them, Mat. 25. 34. *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Every syllable whereof is full of Glory. What shall be done in the making way to this Sentence, the Scripture doth not distinctly inform us, and therefore we can but conjecture. *Whether all the Sins of God's Children shall then be laid open, is not for us to tell?* It is indeed called a Judgment, and we are told of the *Books being opened,* &c. But these things are but *Analogical* to the like things among Men, and not to be limited by the measures of our Reason. Only it is certain, that as there will be no disgrace there put upon any of God's saved ones, so all shall be managed to the most astonishing Manifestation of the Riches of that Grace, by which they were brought to partake in this Salvation. Now in this Sentence there is both a full Acknowledgement and Acquittance of them. And there are several particulars wherein their Happiness in this appears.

1. *THE Sentence itself;* or the thing that he will adjudge them unto: *Come, inherit the Kingdom.* Here is all comprehended in this, which can go in to make the enjoyer of it as happy as his Nature is capable of. In it there is comprized, a perfect Acquittance from all Guilt, and discharge from all Misery, and an entire allotment of all Felicity in everlasting Life. The Kingdom, is that of Glory, and the Security thereof Christ declares to be the Satisfaction of his People here against Fear, Luk. 12. 32. And he adjudgeth them to inherit it. They had been made *Heirs of it* before, Jam. 2. 5. But now they are called to Possession, which must needs compleat all their Hopes, and fill all their Desires.

2. *THE*

2. *The Author of this Sentence*; the Mouth from which it proceeds, and the Authority by which it is pronounced. It is not an Option, or, expression of good Will, but it comes from the Mouth of the Judge, it is the King that saith it; Jesus Christ, who is *vested with all Power in Heaven and Earth*; whom his Father hath constituted the Judge of that great Athize, hath given him the Keys of Heaven and Hell, and the Jurisdiction of Life and Death; it is therefore a Sentence, that will certainly take place and never fail.

3. *The Ground of this Sentence*, or that on which it is built; *which was prepared for you before the Foundation of the World*. And this also confirms their Happiness, & shews them how surely it derives to them, in that the free Grace of God, laid it in for them. So that, whatsoever forfeiture, there was made of it by Man's Apostacy, how unworthy, for ever the Man hath discovered himself of it, by his own Sins and Follies, he may still be the more satisfied, in that it comes in the most secure way that can be. It is an Inheritance, and therefore he is an Heir to it. It is not the Purchase of his own doings, but that which he was born to, in the new Birth; it was intended for him from the Beginning; it was his by eternal Designation, and in time it was provided: it was forfeited by Sin, but Jesus Christ was sent by his Father on this errand, & he came into the World to procure it for them, and then left the World, & went to Heaven still to make it ready; & hath sent his Holy Spirit to apply this Title to them, by making them the Children of God through Faith in Jesus Christ. In all of which will be declared the infinite & everlasting Love of God to them. And how happy will they appear to be?

4. *THE Testimony, which with the Sentence he shall give of them*; which is express, *Mat. 25. 35, 36. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.* Not that this will be the Matter of their Justification or Acquittance at that Day, as some by mistake judge. For the Title to the Inheritance was given them before they did any of these things, and was given to them freely. But as there is a reward of Grace promised in the new Covenant to the faithful Services of God's Children, so, not only will it be introductory to the Recompense, but no little part of it, that then the Lord Jesus Christ, will declare his Approbation of, and signify, how particularly he regarded, and recorded, every act of Love to him, which they had done; when every act of Faith, Holiness, Integrity, shall have its Remark; when the most secret Services done to him, shall be openly rewarded; when the least expression of Love to him, in the poorest of his Members, shall be rewarded, and a *Cup of cold Water, given to a Disciple under that Title, shall not be lost.* And how honourable and comfortable will it be, to have

those things for which they were despised, reviled, and counted Hypocrites, by a wicked World, testified unto, by the Judge himself, to have been upright, sincere, and very acceptable to him, and that their Labour hath not been in vain.

5. *THE manner of pronouncing this Sentence, will also further confirm their Happiness*; And that is with the sweetest Compellation; *Come ye blessed of my Father.* Surely they shall feel the Happiness of this Word, in the Exstasy it shall put their Souls into: When together with the stately Majesty of a Judge, the most winning Characters of Love will be written upon his Countenance, and Grace shall be poured forth on his Lips: When with most alluring Compellations he shall say, *Come, Arise, and come away, you that have followed me in the Regeneration; you that have forsaken all for me, and not been ashamed of me in the midst of a sinful and adulterous Generation; Come along with me to my Kingdom, and sit down with me upon my Throne.*

6. *THEIR Happiness will be enhauced by the Time and Place when and where this Sentence shall be pronounced.* It shall be in the great and last Day, before the Supreme Tribunal, when a final Issue shall be put to all the Affairs of Time, and the Sentence of the Judge shall confirm their Eternal State irreversibly. When this shall be pronounced in the Presence and Audience of all the glorious Angels of Light, and all the Legions of Darknes, and the whole Progeny of Mankind that have ever been in the World, in that full Audience, this Proclamation shall be made concerning them. With this therefore our Saviour Christ encourageth us to serve him faithfully in this Life, *Mat. 6. 4. Thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.* *Luk. 12. 8.*

7. *THEIR Happiness in this, will be yet further set off, by the contrary Sentence that shall be pronounced, on them that are on his left Hand.* Account whereof we have, in *Mat. 25. 41. Depart from me, ye cursed; into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* It will be a wonderful foil to the Felicity of Believers, to hear themselves so solemnly blessed by Christ; knowing that those *whom he blesseth, are blessed indeed*, when they shall hear the other so dreadfully cursed. And the more glorious will it appear to them, and ravishing, when the distinguishing Grace of God will shew forth in it, in making such a difference between those who were once in the same Condemnation. Thus shall the Godly stand upright in the Judgment: All the false Charges and Calumnies with which they have been assailed, be wiped off; their Names vindicated; their Accusers silenced; those that hated them be confounded; and they themselves joyfully waiting, for the happy execution of this blessed Sentence upon them, in their being removed, to the Eternal Kingdom.

8. *THE Honour that shall be put upon them, during the process of the Judgment upon the Wicked.* As the dead in Christ shall rise up to their

their honourable Judgment shall first pass, which the Wicked shall look upon, and tremblingly expect their own Doom; which will next be proceeded unto. Which how terrible it will be, is to be read in the Sentence which will proceed upon it. For, or in order to which there must be a Process, and how long this will last, we are not told, and may not determine; only it is certain, that till this be over, the Court will not break up, nor the Judge return to his Kingdom; till when the Righteous must also tarry; during which, there is also a special note of Dignity and Glory, which he will confer upon them, viz. to be *Assessors with him in judging the World*. We have such a strange expression used, 1 Cor. 6. 2, 3. *Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?* Where by Saints we are to understand such as are so, not only by external Denomination, but a true inward Sanctification. Of whom it is said, Psal. 149. ult. *This honour have all his saints*. Which that we may rightly understand, let us observe these few Conclusions,

1. *THAT there must be nothing of the personal Honour belonging to Christ as Judge, given to the Saints*. It belongs to him alone, to Cite all to appear before him, to Arraign them at his Bar, to Examine them, and pass the final Sentence upon them. This Power belongs originally to God, and is *economically* derived to Christ, by Commision from his Father, Joh. 5. 22. *For the Father judgeth no man: but hath committed all judgment unto the Son*. Nor is a meer Creature fit for, or capable of it: To allow any thing of this to Saints, would derogate from the Glory of Christ.

2. *THERE are Thrones provided for them, on which they shall now be made to sit, together with Christ, while he judgeth Wicked Men & Devils*. We read in Luk. 22. 29, 30. *And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me: That ye may eat & drink at my table, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*. And Mat. 19. 28. *I shall not meddle with their Interpretation, who apply these Texts to the Millennium; and suppose they may be properly attributed to the great & general Judgment, and point us to the honourable Entertainment of the Children of God in that Day, who, during the Management of what is to be done, after their personal Acquittance, are advanced to the Dignity of thus sitting with Christ after a magnificent manner*.

3. *THE Saints shall be interessed in the Judgment of the Ungodly Men and Devils*. It would be too big a Catachresis put upon the Word, *Judging*, if we should only interpret it of their honourable Treatment during this Transaction. There must therefore be something put upon them, which may, in a sober sense, bear the Notion of it in a subordinate way. The Judge then will make some Improvement of them, in his Judging the Wicked; they shall not be *meer Assessors and Spectators, but shall have a real Concern in the Judgment it*

self. And I suppose that there are these Things, which may be safely asserted on this Account, viz.

(1.) *THEY shall judge the World in and by Christ the great Judge*. Christ and the Saints, do make but one mystical Body, whereof he is the Head, and they are the Members: and what the Head doth, that the whole Man is said to do. And certainly, it will be a great Honour reflected upon them, that their Head and Saviour manageth this whole Affair; that the King doth it, the Queen sitting by. But this is not all in this Matter. And therefore,

(2.) *THEY shall judge the World by their Lives*. The Lives which the Saints have led in this World, will convince and condemn the World. Thus we read of Noah, Heb. 11. 7. *By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*. When Men are brought upon their Trial, and Enquiry made, what Title they have to the Kingdom, and what reason there is, why these should be acquitted and glorified, while those are condemned and destroyed; and the Lives of the one sort, are set against the Lives of the other. The equity of the Proceeding, will thus be exemplified and manifested, and the Ungodly forever silenced. It will be made to appear, that these believed in Christ, repented from dead Works, accepted the Terms of the Gospel, served God with an upright Heart, kept themselves from the Sins of the Times and Places they lived in, endured Scorn and Persecution, for the Name of Christ; but that the other did not so, but despised offered Grace, trampled upon Salvation, hated to be reformed, lived and died in Impenitency, and scoffed at all those that would not run the same Pace in Riot that they did. This the Judge will improve, Mat. 25. 35, 42.

(3.) *THEY shall judge them by their Approbation of the Sentence of the Judge*. They will fully assent to the Righteousness and Equity of it; applaud the Holiness and Impartiality of Christ in it. They will neither plead for them, nor be grieved at the severe Doom passed upon them, but commend and praise the Judge on account of it. Thus are Saints bro't in, Rev. 15. 3. *And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints*. Which, though in the Prophecy, it aims at something before, yet is borrowed from the great Judgment. All therefore are called to praise the Lord on this account, Psal. 46. 11, &c. When the Judge shall pass the terrible Sentence, they shall say *Amen, and shout for Joy*.

(4.) *THEY shall judge them by their Triumphing over them*. It is a Day wherein the Children of God shall have a perfect Victory over all their Enemies. As those formerly insulted

ed over them, and were their Judges, and made their brags how they had trodden them down; now their turn will come, and they shall *put their feet upon the necks of their proudest Adversaries, and turn all their Taunts upon them.* *Psal. 58. 10. Mic. 7. 8, &c.* And though there are some beginnings of these things, which sometimes fall out in this World, yet the great Accomplishment of them will be in that Day.

(5.) *ALL the Judgments which the Saints passed upon the World, when they were here, shall then be brought in and confirmed by the great Judgment of that Day.* There are a great many things wherein they so do. Godly Ministers, who are faithful in their Work, do often solemnly declare God's Threatnings against Sinners that would not repent. Godly Parents did frequently warn their ungodly Children of the Wrath of God, which they exposed themselves unto. Pious Neighbours would take occasions to tell their lewd Neighbours, what was like to be the end of the Courses they followed. And whatsoever they do on this account, it is, *ex Officio*, as they are the World's Judges. And all this will be confirmed and ratified in the high Court, and the Lord Jesus Christ will pass the same Sentence upon them, with this remembrance. Hence that, *Ezek. 22. 2. Now thou son of man, wilt thou judge, the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations.* Thus will that Promise be accomplished, in, *2 Tim. 2. 12. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.* And that Prediction take Place, *Psal. 49. 14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave, death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.*

USE. *WHAT Admirable Consolation is here presented to all Believers?* And let the Fore-thoughts of these things, sweeten your Meditations of, and make you in Love with Christ's Appearing. The Consideration of the great Judgment, is very awful. *2 Cor. 5. 10, 11.* But the Children of God have abundant Occasion to ponder on it with great Delight: To sit down, and look over the Spot of Time before us, and speculate the hastning Day, when the great Trump shall Sound, and the drowsy Dust of all Men shall awake. When the holy Angels shall gather together all rational Beings: When the tremendous Judge, shall come from the highest Heavens, clothed with awful Majesty, and take his Throne, and Proclamation shall be made to all to come and receive their Everlasting Doom. Now to think, I shall then be arrayed in Garments of Praise, ascend to meet my Judge, who is also my Saviour, return with him to the great Solemnity, be placed with Honour on his right Hand; hear him say with greatest sweetness, *Come thou blessed, Redeemed with my Blood, Sanctified by my Spirit, Loved and Chosen from Eternity by my Father; Arise, and come away: Come and take possession of all the Glories of the King-*

dom: Come and live with me, and lie in my Embraces for ever: *Well done good and faithful Servant, enter into the Joy of thy Lord: Come sit down on a Throne with me now, and then go home to my Palace and live with me for ever.* And is not this a Day to be wistled for? One would think it should make you to cry out in Extasy, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.* In the mean while, whatsoever Calumnies, hard Censures, and unjust Condemnations you meet with in and from a sinful Generation, let not your Hearts be troubled at it, but look over to this Day, and Contemplate the better Judgment you shall find upon it; and Comfort your selves with these Things.

[JUNE 4. 1700.]

SERMON CXLVI.