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Prepared for Glory

"He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." — 2 Corinthians 5:5

Summary:

The final blessedness of believers is eternal life with God, pictured as a heavenly home and as mortality being swallowed up by life. Yet no one is naturally prepared for this glory. God must prepare us through a divine work that education, example, and moral persuasion cannot achieve. This fitness matters because happiness depends not only on the excellence of what we enjoy, but also on having a heart suited to enjoy it. God also gives believers the Holy Spirit as an earnest—not merely a pledge, but the beginning of the inheritance itself. The Spirit's present work therefore anticipates heaven and offers a real foretaste of it: spiritual knowledge begins, holiness renews the inner person, and believers already experience peace, rest, joy, fellowship, and praise. Through grace, heaven becomes known and desired before believers enter its fullness.

Outline:

1. **God prepares believers for final blessedness**
   - The promised inheritance is eternal life in the heavenly house that God has made.
2. **This preparation is a divine work**
   - We are not born Christians, nor can education, example, or persuasion create spiritual life.
3. **Fitness for heaven is necessary**
   - Happiness requires a heart conformed to its object and able to desire and enjoy it.
4. **The Spirit is the earnest of heaven**
   - His presence is not merely a promise of the inheritance but a real beginning and portion of it.
5. **Present grace is a foretaste of glory**
   - Knowledge, holiness, peace, joy, fellowship, worship, and eternal life have already begun in believers.

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Text

This very thing is nothing less than the final blessedness of the righteous. Though it does not yet fully appear, it is partly revealed and described in Scripture by various names and images. In the preceding verses, it is called "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and also "life"—"Mortality shall be swallowed up of life."

The Apostle reminds us that God prepares us for the whole and gives us a part. This preparation is not natural: we are made Christians through God's work alone. Neither others nor we accomplish it; education, example, and moral persuasion cannot, for "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God."

This work is both necessary and divine. A title to glory is worthless without fitness for it. Every role or state requires qualifications, and higher ones demand more. Happiness depends not on an object's excellence but on whether our disposition suits it. We must want and hope for something before it can satisfy us. Do I have within me what could find happiness in the heaven described in Scripture?

If He has wrought us for the whole, He has given us a part—the earnest of the Spirit. Unlike a pledge, returned when an agreement is completed, the earnest both assures payment and remains as part of the bargain.

This is instructive: through the Spirit's presence and influence, the believer possesses not merely a sign of heaven but a foretaste of it. Is heaven perfect knowledge? The believer's understanding is already opened; they spiritually discern and see light in God's light. Is it perfect holiness? They are already freed from sin's power and love, renewed in mind, and delight in God's law inwardly. Is it perfect happiness, exceeding or fullness of joy, or pleasures forevermore? Even now, blessed are those who know the joyful sound.

God's people have rest—but "we which have believed do enter into rest." They shall know peace—but now have "a peace which passeth all understanding." They shall enter their Lord's joy—but now, "believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

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They will join the perfected just and dwell in God's house, praising him forever—but saints are already their companions and delight, and they have begun this work: "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth."

This experience loosens their attachment to the world and makes them willing to depart. Heaven is no distant, unknown good: they have come to the living God's city, share the glory to be revealed, and possess everlasting life.

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, Morning and Evening Exercises (January 26, Morning), first published in 1854.