

God is the gospel¹

A believer who hath the eyes of his understanding enlightened, his judgment and apprehension is [that] God is the chief good and supreme happiness [is] an interest in God, a conformity to God, the enjoyment of God here and hereafter....² As a covetous and an ambitious man, and a man given to carnal pleasure, will go through much difficulty to have their respective desires fulfilled; so will a believing soul suffer the loss of all, so he may win Christ. "None but Christ," saith an illuminated believer. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, or in the earth I desire in comparison of thee?"³

There are many good objects in heaven and earth besides thee. There are angels in heaven and saints on earth. But, soul, what are these to thee? Heaven, without thy presence would be no heaven to me. A palace without thee, a crown without thee, cannot satisfy me. But with thee can I be content, though in a poor cottage. With thee I am at liberty in bonds.... [I]f I have thy smiles, I can bear the world's frowns. If I have spiritual liberty in my soul that I can ascend

1. From *A Voice from the Prison*, 17-19, *passim*.

2. Collins placed Psalm 17:15 in the margin next to this statement.

3. See Psalm 73:25.

to thee by faith and have communion with thee, thou shalt choose my portion for me in this world, "for in the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."⁴

This is the esteem a believing soul hath of divine objects. Christ is precious to him, because he seeth him and believeth in him.⁵ But the ignorant soul will make excuses when invited to the best of blessings, as those who were invited to the supper (Luke 14). One had married a wife, another bought a yoke of oxen, another had his farm and they could not come. Had they but known the worth of this supper, and what choice dainties there was, they would never have made such pitiful excuses. Had they but known the reconciling grace there and seen the want of it—the pardoning, justifying grace there and seen the want of it—had they but known that sanctifying, adopting grace and seen the want of it—they would have left their farm, their oxen, their wife, children, and all.

The soul which was once blind, and now seeth, saith of Christ and his benefits, as once the Queen of Sheba [said] of Solomon's wisdom and grandeur, half was not told me by the minister of that glory, beauty, excellency, grace, goodness that I now see in him.⁶ Now, I believe not by report, as the men of Samaria said, but we have seen him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.⁷

4. Psalm 94:19.

5. Cp. 1 Peter 2:6-7.

6. See 1 Kings 10:7.

7. See John 4:41-42.

...Such a soul...enjoyeth temporal things as if he enjoyed them not. He may have gold, silver, wife, children, possessions, but his affections, the best of his affections God hath. He hath those things, but is not defiled with them. He useth those things as the traveler doth his inn to help him to his journey's end. But as for the world, he hath all the things of it under his feet.⁸

8. See 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

