

A.W. Pink on Hebrews 11:40

“That they without us should not be made perfect.” ... The “perfecting” of a thing consists in the well-finishing of it, and a full accomplishment of all things appertaining thereto. There is no doubt that the ultimate reference of our text is to the eternal glory of the whole Family of Faith in heaven; yet we believe it also includes the various degrees by which that perfection is attained, and the means thereunto. They are,

First, the taking away of sin—which makes man most imperfect—and the clothing him with the robe of righteousness, in which he may appear perfect before God. These were secured by the life and death of Jesus Christ. In that, the O.T. saints were not “made perfect without us,” for their sins and our sins were expiated by the same Sacrifice, and their persons and our persons are justified by the same Righteousness.

Second, the subduing of the power of indwelling sin, enabling those justified to walk in the paths of righteousness, which is through the enabling of the Spirit. In this too the O. T. saints were not (relatively) “made perfect without us,” as is clear from Psalm 23:4; 51:11 etc.

Third, the Spirit enabling those who are united to Christ to stand up against all assaults, and to persevere in a spiritual growth; in this also the O. T. saints were not “made perfect without us,” as is evident by a comparison of Psalm 97:10 with 1 Peter 1:15.

Fourth, the receiving of the soul to Glory when it leaves the body: this also was common to O.T. and N.T. saints alike—we are not unmindful of the carnal theory held by some who imagine that prior to the death of Christ, the souls of saints went only to some imaginary Paradise “in the heart of the earth”; but this is much too near akin to the subterranean limbus of Romanism to merit any refutation.

Fifth, the resurrection of the body. In this the whole Family of Faith shall share alike, and at the same time: “In Christ shall all be made alive; but every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:22, 23). And who are “Christ’s”? why, all that the Father gave to Him, all that He purchased with His blood. God’s Word knows nothing of His people being raised in sections, at intervals.

Sixth, the re-union between the soul and body, which takes place at Christ’s appearing. In Hebrews 12:23 the O. T. saints are referred to as “the spirits of just men made perfect,” but they are still “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body” (Rom. 8:23). In this too all the redeemed shall share alike, being “caught up together to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17).

Seventh, the entrance into eternal glory, when O. T. and N. T. saints alike shall, all together, be “forever with the Lord.” Then shall be completely realized that ancient oracle concerning Shiloh “unto Him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen. 49:10). Then shall be fulfilled that mystical word, “I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11). As the Lord Jesus declared, “I lay down My life for the (O. T.) sheep; And other (N. T.) sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one flock (Greek and R. V.), one Shepherd” (John 10:15, 16). Then it shall be that Christ will “gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad” (John 11:52)—not only among all nations, but through all dispensations.

In all of these seven degrees mentioned above are the elect of God “made perfect”; in all of them shall the O. T. and N. T. saints share alike: all shall come “in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). God deferred the resurrection and final glorification of the O. T. saints until the saints of this N.T. era should be called out and gathered into the one Body: “God has so arranged matters, that the complete accomplishment of the promise, both to the Old and New Testament believers, shall take place together; ‘they’ shall be made perfect, but not without ‘us’; we and they shall attain perfection together” (John Brown). Thus to “be made perfect” is here the equivalent of receiving (the full accomplishment of) the promise, or enjoying together the complete realization of the “better thing.” Verses 39 and 40 are inseparably linked together, and the language used in the one serves to interpret that employed in the other, both being colored by the dominant theme of this epistle.

John Brown of Edinburgh on Hebrews 11:40

Brown: “*God has provided something better for us.*” There can be no doubt that the pronoun *us* refers to saints under the Christian economy. For them God has “provided some better thing.” The question naturally occurs, Better than what? And the answer ordinarily returned is, Better than what the saints under the OT economy enjoyed. *They* did not received the promise, i.e., the promised blessing: *we* have received it. All this is truth, and important truth; but still I doubt if it is the truth here stated. The promise here spoken of does not seem to be directly and principally the promise of the Messiah, or of the blessings of His reign to be enjoyed in the world; but “the promise of eternal inheritance,” — a promise, the full accomplishment of which the saints under the new economy do not obtain in the present state, any more than the saints under the ancient economy, — a promise, the full accomplishment of which they are to obtain after a patient enduring of the will of God. These “better things” which God has provided for us, or foreseen concerning us, are to be enjoyed when we and our elder brethren are together perfected.

The answer to the question, What is the reference of the word “better” in the clause before us? — with what are the things provided for Christians by God compared? — which we would be disposed to give is this: The comparison is not between what the saints under the old economy enjoyed and what saints under the New Testament economy enjoy on earth, but between what the saints under the new economy enjoy on earth, and what they are ultimately to enjoy in heaven. ‘God has provided something better for us than anything we can attain in the present state, just as He had provided something better for them than anything they could attain in the present state. The ultimate object of their faith and hope lay beyond death and the grave, and so does ours.’ ... Indeed, the Apostle does not seem to be here pointing out a contrast, but a

resemblance, in the circumstances of Old Testament and New Testament believers...

It now only remainst that we turn our attention to the concluding clause of the sentence, “that they without us should not be made perfect.”... God has so arranged matters, that the complete accomplishment of the promise, both the the Old Testament and New Testament believers, shall take place together. The Old Testament saints died without receiving the promised blessing; but their faith was not therefore of no avail. In due season they shall be perfected; i.e., the promise, in its full extent, shall be performed to them. And as God has provided for us, too, “better things” than any we enjoy here below, when they are perfected we shall be perfected along with them.

To “be made perfect,” is, I apprehend, just the same thing as “to receive the promise,” or to enjoy the “better things” provided for us. This exactly accords with the representations in other parts of Scripture. The whole body of the saved are together to be introduced into the full possession of the “salvaiton that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” There is to be “a gathering together unto the Lord Jesus ast His coming.” They are to be presented “a glorious church,” perfect and complete, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” As one assembly, they are to be invited to enter into “the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.” They are to be “caught up together to meet the Lord in the air” and so are they to be forever with the Lord.”

Such views were well fitted to encourage the Christian Hebrews to persevere in believing, — to live by faith, to die in faith. ‘The ancient believers lived and died without obtaining the great promised blessing, and so must you; but the promised blessing, in all its extent, will in due time be conferred on you both. They shall be perfected, and so shall you.’