

Why does God leave us on earth after we are saved?

Aside from the obvious: *to witness to unbelievers the salvation of the Lord*. The doctrine of rewards for works after justification, in fact, does not stand alone. It is tightly bound to a well defined and grounded theodicy (the vindication of divine goodness and providence in view of the existence of real physical and moral evil) in the world. A valid theodicy must successfully answer this attack syllogism:

- God is entirely good and omnibenevolent.
- God is omnipotent.
- Evil exists.¹
- Since evil exists, God is either not entirely good, or he is not omnipotent.
- Or, how can an all-powerful, all good God allow evil and its devastating results to exist?

One good reason for allowing evil to exist temporarily is that it's presence, both physically and morally, is necessary to the development of moral virtues: Bravery, kindness, mercy, patience, peaceableness, gentleness, self-control, truthfulness, compassion, humility, etc. God might have created a world without evil being possible. But in doing so a certain kind or level of goodness, but lacking the possibility of developing these virtues, would it be maximally good?

Notice how the moral virtues really dovetail with and describe the Christian virtues including the Fruit of the Spirit.

So the very temporary existence of evil can be answered by not only the development of moral virtues, but the heavenly approbation and reward and recognition that lasts for eternity! So virtue is rewarded at the Bema for Christians. Furthermore, those virtues will find utility in the excellent but not perfect Millennial Kingdom when we rule and reign, and then endure into the perfect New Heavens and New Earth where their development is no longer possible (physical and moral evil no longer existing), but their enduring benefit and stature can be fully appreciated and enjoyed.

1 The atheist or agnostic using the attack syllogism have an even greater problem with evil! If they acknowledge that evil exists, then they must admit that objective good and evil exist as moral categories, and the universe and human existence is not merely automatic electro-chemical reactions. For on the naturalist view, there is no such thing as real evil or good. There is only "is". So they have to steal from and assume the truth of the theist's worldview to make their argument against theism.

***The Portion Of The Righteous, by Jonathan Edwards; December, 1740,
Romans 2:10, But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good.***

3. There are different degrees of happiness and glory in heaven. As there are degrees among the angels, viz. thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; so there are degrees among the saints. In heaven are many mansions, and of different degrees of dignity. The glory of the saints above will be in some proportion to their eminency in holiness and good works here.

Christ will reward all according to their works. He that gained ten pounds was made ruler over ten cities, and he that gained five pounds over five cities. Luke 19:17; 2 Cor. 9:6, "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." And the apostle Paul tells us that, as one star differs from another star in glory, so also it shall be in the resurrection of the dead. 1 Cor. 15:41. Christ tells us that he who gives a cup of cold water unto a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward. But this could not be true, if a person should have no greater reward for doing many good works than if he did but few.

It will be no damp to the happiness of those who have lower degrees of happiness and glory, that there are others advanced in glory above them. For all shall be perfectly happy, every one shall be perfectly satisfied. Every vessel that is cast into this ocean of happiness is full, though there are some vessels far larger than others.

And there shall be no such thing as envy in heaven, but perfect love shall reign through the whole society. Those who are not so high in glory as other, will not envy those that are higher, but they will have so great, and strong, and pure love to them, that they will rejoice in their superior happiness. Their love to them will be such that they will rejoice that they are happier than themselves; so that instead of having a damp to their own happiness, it will add to it. They will see it to be fit that they that have been most eminent in works of righteousness should be most highly exalted in glory. And they will rejoice in having that done, that is fittest to be done.

There will be a perfect harmony in that society; those that are most happy will also be most holy, and all will be both perfectly holy and perfectly happy. But yet there will be different degrees of both holiness and happiness according to the measure of each one's capacity, and therefore those that are lowest in glory

will have the greatest love to those that are highest in happiness, because they will see most of the image of God in them. And having the greatest love to them, they will rejoice to see them the most happy and the highest in glory.

And so, on the other hand, those that are highest in glory, as they will be the most lovely, so they will be fullest of love. As they will excel in happiness, they will proportionally excel in divine benevolence and love to others, and will have more love to God and to the saints than those that are lower in holiness and happiness. And besides, those that will excel in glory will also excel in humility.

Here in this world, those that are above others are the objects of envy, because that others conceive of them as being lifted up with it. But in heaven it will not be so, but those saints in heaven who excel in happiness will also in holiness, and consequently in humility. The saints in heaven are more humble than the saints on earth, and still the higher we go among them the greater humility there is. The highest orders of saints, who know most of God, see most of the distinction between God and them, and consequently are comparatively least in their own eyes, and so are more humble.

The exaltation of some in heaven above the rest will be so far from diminishing the perfect happiness and joy of the rest who are inferior, that they will be the happier for it. Such will be the union in their society that they will be partakers of each other's happiness. Then will be fulfilled in its perfection that which is declared in 1 Cor. 12:26, "If one of the members be honoured all the members rejoice with it."

So, to the question, 'If all saints are perfectly and completely happy how can there be degrees of happiness?'

Edwards mentioned "capacities." An illustration may help: Some may have a 8 oz cup of capacity based upon thier works and others may have the capacity of the ocean. When each arrive in heaven, they will each be perfectly happy because each one will be filled to the fullest of their capacity, but the person with the "ocean capacity" will of course have the greater happiness, while the 8 oz worker will not miss what the other has. Anthony Hoeksema answers and says:

When one has studied music and has attained some proficiency in playing a musical instrument, his capacity for enjoying music has been greatly increased. In a similar way, our devotion to Christ and his kingdom increases

our capacity for enjoying the blessings of that kingdom, both now and in the life to come. Leon Morris says, "Here and now the man who gives himself wholeheartedly to the service of Christ knows more of the joy of the Lord than the half-hearted. We have no warrant from the NT for thinking it will be otherwise in heaven."

Bunyan said something very similar, "*He who is most in the bosom of God, and who so acts for him here, he is the man who will be best able to enjoy most of God in the kingdom of heaven.*"